DOCTOR WHO

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED!

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A 1979 publicity photo of Joanna Lumley as Sapphire and David McCallum as an uncharacteristically cheerful Steel

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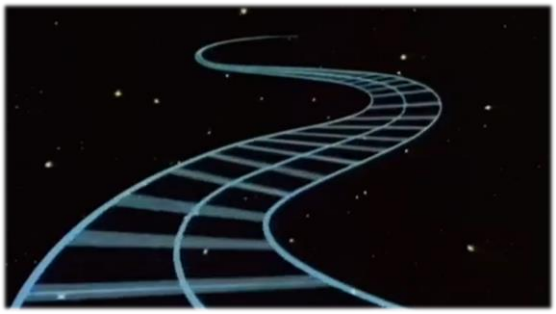
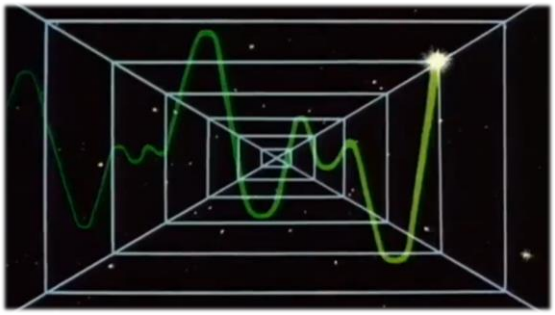
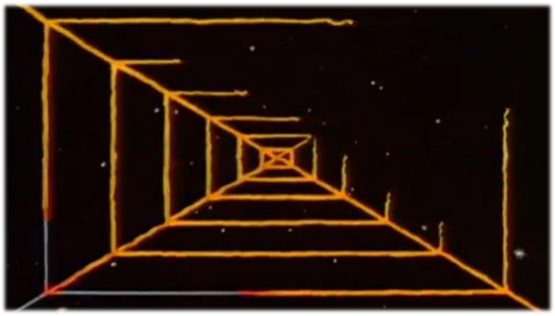




All irregularities will be handled by the forces controlling each dimension.

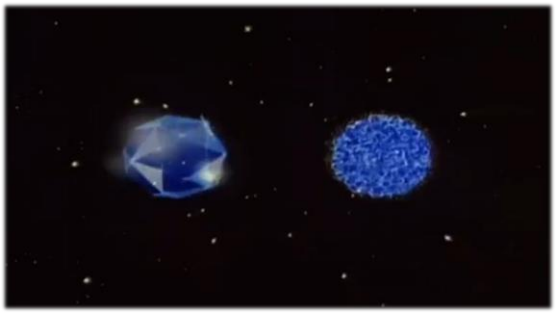
Transuranic heavy elements may not be used where there is life.



Medium atomic weights are available.

Gold, Lead, Copper, Jet, Diamond,

Radium, Sapphire, Silver and Steel.



Sapphire and Steel have been assigned!

INTRODUCTION

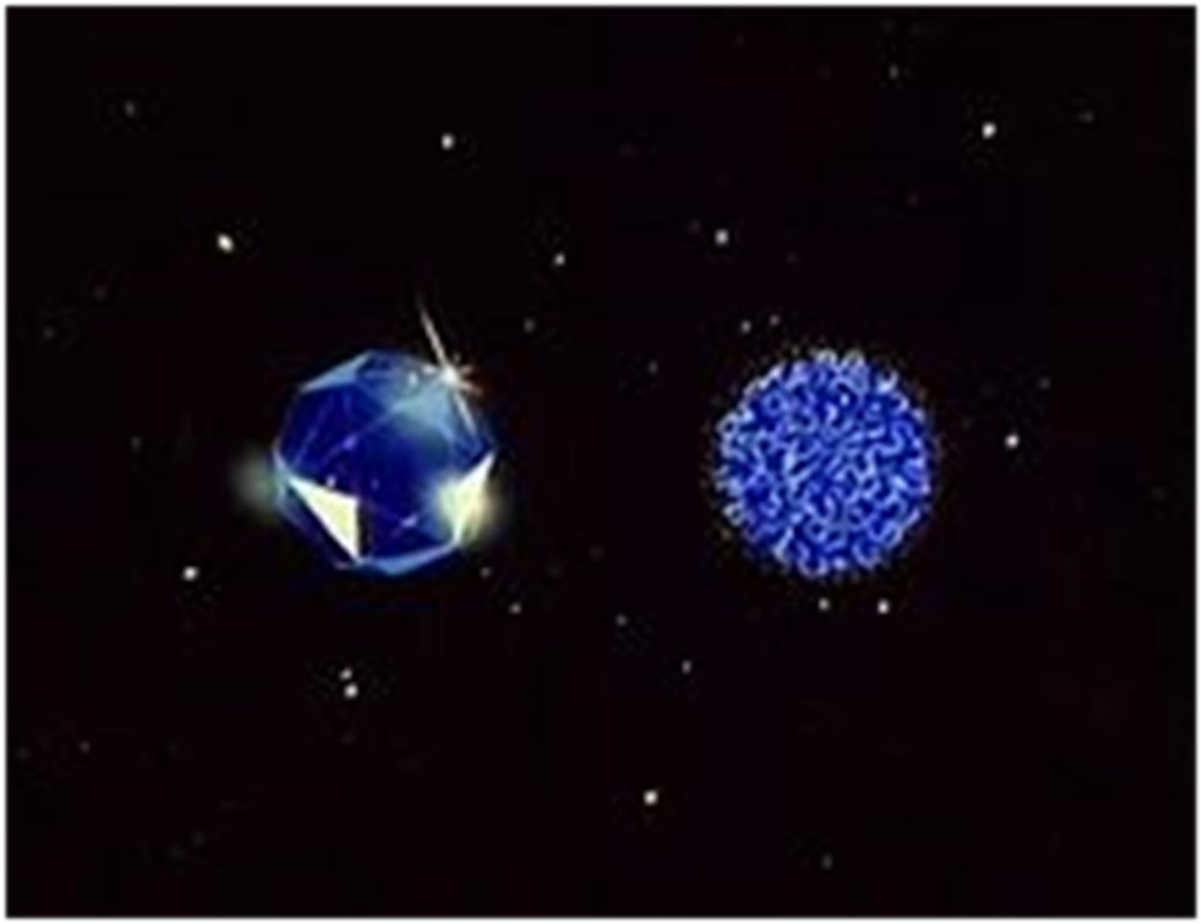
Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned! is a sourcebook for the *Doctor Who Roleplaying Game*. It can be used to add characters and concepts from the *Sapphire & Steel* TV series to a *Doctor Who* adventure or to run a campaign fully set in the *S&S* universe. In the latter case in particular, the GM is likely to need to expand on what we know of *Sapphire & Steel* from the information provided in this sourcebook. The TV show was intriguingly (frustratingly?) vague on precisely who Sapphire and Steel are, what the mysterious authority that assigns them to their missions is, and the nature of the threats that they face.

By necessity, some of the information provided here includes my own interpretation of what we see in the TV stories, which is often claimed to have baffled many viewers. Other interpretations may be equally valid, and I've used a number of reference works to gather the views of others. *Assigned! The Unofficial and Unauthorised Guide to Sapphire & Steel* by Richard Callaghan (Telos Publishing) and *Sapphire & Steel Viewer's Guide* by Adrian Sherlock (self-published) both include story summaries, analysis and behind-the-scenes information on the TV episodes. The former also provides information on the spin-off comic-strips, audio dramas and text stories, none of which are covered by this sourcebook other than one or two brief mentions. *A* deep dive into the influences and meanings of *Sapphire & Steel* is provided in a trilogy of publications in Obverse Books' Silver Archive range: *Sapphire & Steel – Assignments I & II* by David & Lesley McIntee, *Assignments III & IV* by Cody Schell, and *Assignments V & VI* by James Cooray Smith. My thanks go to the writers of all these reference works for the ideas they've helped generate!

On the face of it, the universes of *Doctor Who* and *Sapphire & Steel* make for natural bedfellows, both dealing with time in their different ways. But in *Sapphire & Steel*, Time (capital T) is the enemy, and messing about with it often results in breaches which allow it to break through into our reality. Time travel is therefore an anathema to Sapphire and Steel and their fellow elemental agents. However, it's sometimes thought that the elementals can travel through time: Sapphire and Steel reveal early on that they were present on the *Mary Celeste*, whose crew vanished in 1872, and later that they will be waiting for the Shape to return in 2055. But writer P.J. Hammond's stated intent is that this isn't correct and that they are merely very long lived. Sapphire can manipulate time to a limited extent, and other elementals may have similar powers. But more general time travel is a no-no in *Sapphire & Steel*. However, Time also turned out to be the enemy in the *Doctor Who* story *Flux*, so perhaps the two universes aren't so far apart after all.

Sapphire & Steel was produced by Associated Television (ATV) and was broadcast on ITV between 1979 and 1982 with six stories over four seasons. They were broadcast in early evening time slots, not too unusual for British telefantasy series of the period, which allowed them to scare younger children, thrill older ones and perhaps mystify adults. P.J. Hammond had vague plans for further stories which would have resolved the cliffhanger ending of *Assignment VI*. However, the end of ATV's franchise and the reported reluctance of the show's two stars, Joanna Lumley and David McCallum, to continue with the show brought it to an end. *Sapphire & Steel* has since attained cult status and is fondly remembered by many who had watched it in their youth.

ELEMENTAL AGENTS



"All irregularities will be handled by the forces controlling each dimension. Transuranic heavy elements may not be used where there is life. Medium atomic weights are available: Gold, Lead, Copper, Jet, Diamond, Radium, Sapphire, Silver and Steel. Sapphire and Steel have been assigned."

Although Sapphire, Steel and their colleagues are sometimes referred to as "time agents", this sourcebook instead uses the term "elemental agents" (or just "elementals") to distinguish them from the Time Agents of the *Doctor Who* universe. The elementals are agents of a mysterious authority whose role is to maintain order across multiple dimensions, especially to prevent Time itself from "breaking through" and causing "time breaks" or "irregularities". It dispatches the elementals to where they are needed so that they arrive seemingly from nowhere at the location of their assignment.

At the time of Sapphire and Steel's first assignment, there were one hundred and twenty-seven elemental agents, including twelve transuranics (see page 10), but only one hundred and six elements in the periodic table. Since then, twelve more transuranic elements have been added to the periodic table.

Not all agents correspond with a chemical element. Some take their names from minerals (mineraloids in the case of Jet) or precious or semi-precious stones, while others such as Steel are metal alloys.

Whether there are elementals corresponding to all currently known chemical elements is unclear. Probably not if we take into account

that, although Steel specifies in *Assignment I* that there are twelve transuranic agents, there were at that time fourteen transuranic elements in the periodic table.

It's also interesting to note that the opening narration specifies *medium* atomic weights. What about those elements with *low* atomic weights and numbers? Perhaps they don't have significant or useful powers, or perhaps they're more suited to realities other than ours and so aren't available for selection. The confirmed elemental with the lowest atomic weight is Iron with 26. Elements with lower atomic weights are, however, found in some of the other substances whose names are used for elemental agents. Sapphires, for example, are largely aluminium oxide (aluminium and oxygen, with atomic numbers 13 and 8 respectively), and diamonds are an allotrope of carbon, which has an atomic number of 6.

The only agents we know from the TV show to definitely exist are the those named in the opening narration: **Gold**, **Lead**, **Copper**, **Jet**, **Diamond**, **Radium**, **Sapphire**, **Silver** and **Steel** in the original version; plus **Mercury**, mentioned in *Assignment IV* (also replacing Lead in the narration used for *Assignment VI*), and **Bronze**, mentioned in *Assignment V*. The Big Finish audios added an eleventh, **Ruby**, and a demo version of the theme also named **Granite**, **Quartz**, **Uranium** and **Iron**. This leaves plenty of scope for GMs and Players to create their own original agents.

The nature and origin of the elementals is obscure. Are they natural lifeforms, artificial beings or something in between? They're certainly not human, and it's implied that our species is only one of many that they know of. It's also probable that they don't even come from our dimension and are deployed to different realities, wherever there are irregularities to be handled.

Elemental agents have some of the characteristics implied by their names. Steel, for example, is cold, hard and strong, while Sapphire is bright and scintillating. Silver is charming, and Lead is heavy.

The agents all share certain powers. They can communicate telepathically and are very long-lived, though not immortal. They don't need to eat or drink but can if they wish, and similarly they don't require sleep but can do so. They do, however, need to breathe. Many, but not all, can teleport. Elemental agents all have the Alien and Elemental Agent traits, the latter providing a number of others (see page 7).

Each elemental also has their own abilities, such as Sapphire's time sensitivity and Silver being able to refashion materials and objects with his bare hands. Many of these have some connection to their names. Steel is superhumanly strong and has a certain resistance to injury, while Lead is even more powerful and can also act as an insulator. If we were to extend this to some of the elementals we haven't actually met, perhaps Diamond is impervious to physical damage or can cut

through any material, Copper might have an affinity with heat or electricity to reflect the element's conductivity, and maybe Radium has an inner fire of some kind.

ELEMENTAL AGENT
(Special Good Alien Trait)

A character with this trait is an elemental agent like Sapphire and Steel. They gain the following Good traits for free: Environmental (Minor: Doesn't need to eat, drink or sleep), Feel the Turn of the Universe, Psychic, Psychic Training and Telepathy. They also gain the following Bad traits: Adversary (Major: Time) and Obligation (Major: The Authority). In addition, Elemental Agent allows the character to purchase Gadget traits.

Elemental Agents demonstrate a measure of flexibility beyond their listed traits, seemingly pulling other abilities from a collective mind. In *Assignment IV*, for example, Steel tells Sapphire they must borrow from the minds of Mercury and Silver to turn glass into a mirror. This gift allows Elemental Agents to use other traits which only last for a single scene by spending Story Points equivalent to their purchase cost. There are limits though, as Sapphire says that Steel can't do spot analyses of people as it's not his "territory", meaning the GM must approve any additional traits obtained like this.

Elemental Agent costs 3 Character Points.

But some abilities have little or no connection to an elemental's name. Sapphires have no particular link to time sensitivity so far as we know, and silver has no close connection to technology. All in all, GMs and Players have a lot of leeway in designing new elemental characters.

OPERATORS AND SPECIALISTS

Elemental agents are classified either as **Operators** or **Specialists** (sometimes with the additional classification of **Investigators**). From the admittedly limited evidence we have, we might assume that elements are often Specialists (such as Silver and Lead) while compounds and mixtures are often Operators (such as Sapphire and Steel). But this isn't an immutable rule.

Operators are generalists and are usually more experienced agents – though Sapphire seems to be a relative novice in *Assignment I*, as Lead comments on the mission being "good training" for her. The Operators are the ones who are sent in to assess a situation and deal with an irregularity. Sapphire and Steel are Operators. Between them, they have both brute force and sensitivity, and make for an effective team.

Specialists don't usually arrive until the Operators have done their work and checked things out. They have specialist skills or abilities that are required in specific situations. Lead and Silver are both Specialists. Lead's ability to insulate others and Silver's technical skills

make them useful on certain missions, but neither are regular members of a team.

Specialists aren't required on all missions but are assigned if the elementals' controlling authority deems them necessary. According to Steel, the Specialists spend a lot of their time just sitting about and doing nothing! They're therefore more likely to be NPCs.

There is also a third classification, that of Investigators. These don't feature in the TV series (though they get a passing mention) and are considered to be a subdivision of Operators. Investigators are sometimes sent in to assess a situation and report back before Operators are assigned. They therefore have skills and abilities particularly useful for reconnaissance missions.

SAPPHIRE

Sapphire's time sensitivity is more acute than that of most elementals. She's able to sense the local date and time of where her assignments take her, and the age and other characteristics of people and objects. She can also see through time and even manipulate it to a limited extent, taking it back, holding it in stasis or looping it. Doing so for too long is taxing though and risks allowing Time to break through. Sapphire also has other non-human senses, such as the ability to analyse the biological makeup of living beings (spot analysis) and sense microscopic particles. When she uses these abilities, particularly those related to time, her eyes often glow a bright blue.

Sapphire is a slim, attractive woman, appearing to be around thirty in human terms. She usually has blonde hair but has occasionally been known to change it. Sapphire wears elegant clothes appropriate to the time and location of her assignments, almost always in bright blue. She sometimes uses time manipulation to instantly change her clothes or hairstyle, a frivolity that Steel doesn't approve of.

Sapphire is charming and friendly towards the humans she interacts with. But this is largely a front to get them to trust her and to extract information from them. Beneath, Sapphire views humans much the same as Steel, as tools to help them or obstacles to overcome. She's just not as overtly manipulative as him. She also has a sardonic wit, often aimed towards Steel.

Although Sapphire seems to lack experience in the first two stories, her partnership with Steel perhaps still being new, she learns quickly and the two make a good team. They soon operate on a level footing, as equals rather than one being more senior than the other.

STEEL

Steel is a grim, often reserved figure. He's not entirely without humour but rarely smiles or laughs, though he's capable of sarcasm. He isn't tall but gives the impression of being powerful. He's the brawn of the partnership, having superhuman strength, resistance to injury and the ability to reduce his body temperature almost to absolute zero.

Steel appears to be older than Sapphire, though he's still attractive. He has fair hair styled with a simple side parting. He usually wears a plain grey suit with a tie in subdued shades of black, grey and white, or sometimes a black dinner suit with black bowtie instead.

Steel has a no-nonsense approach to their missions and can be quite ruthless. He has less knowledge and understanding of our world than Sapphire does. He also lacks empathy and seems largely unemotional. In truth, he doesn't understand emotions and finds them confusing or even embarrassing. Despite this, there are hints that Steel has romantic feelings for Sapphire; he just lacks the ability to express them.

LEAD

Lead is a jovial giant of a man, grinning broadly through a small, neat beard and often breaking into song. Despite his weighty presence, he has a fun, friendly personality and even puts on a smile at Steel's humourless antics. Lead is less formally dressed than some elementals, favouring casual clothing such as a sleeveless jerkin over a heavy sweater, trousers and boots, all in dark shades. Unusually for an elemental, his deep, warm voice has an American accent. Although elementals don't need to eat, Lead has a love of good home cooking!

Like Steel, Lead has superhuman strength and resilience. He's a Specialist and can insulate others from the effects of extreme cold. He often works in tandem with Steel, who is able to reduce his body temperature to close to absolute zero but often needs Lead's assistance to protect him from the cold. This takes it out of Lead just as much as it does Steel, and they both need to recover afterwards. Lead assisted Sapphire and Steel with an assignment on the *Mary Celeste*.

Can we read anything into the replacement of Lead with Mercury in the opening narration for the final story? Has Lead been killed or neutralised in some way, perhaps by the same transient beings who trap Sapphire and Steel?

SILVER

Silver is a technical expert who can manipulate objects, transforming them into something else with his bare hands, and can cause electrical and mechanical devices to operate from a distance. He's a Specialist, assigned when technology is involved or needed for a mission. Silver smugly claims to be infallible due to built-in "instant reduplication" - but it's quickly shown that he is in fact capable of errors!

Silver has a flirtatious relationship with Sapphire and a mischievous, almost waspish manner with Steel. He's a charming character and a dapper one, being immaculately dressed in a light grey suit with a striped tie that adds a touch of colour, and sometimes a waistcoat for added panache. He has thin, almost fey features and reddish hair.

But is Silver totally trustworthy? At the end of *Assignment VI*, he isn't caught in the transient beings' trap but somehow escapes. Did he do a deal with them to save his own neck?

Silver is possibly in a relationship with Copper, as in *Assignment I* Lead says that she's having problems with him. But it's possible these are just professional in nature.

OTHER ELEMENTALS

We hear a couple of pieces of gossip in *Assignment I*, in which Lead tells Steel that Jet sends her love (to Steel's embarrassment) and that Copper is having problems with Silver (again). As mentioned above, the latter implies some sort of relationship between Copper and Silver, which could either be romantic or professional. The metal copper being used in electrical wiring might indicate that the elemental Copper has a similar affinity to technology as Silver, leading to a rivalry.

If the series had continued, P.J. Hammond had intended to introduce Mercury as a new recurring character. Mercury is mentioned in *Assignment IV*, when Sapphire and Steel are trapped in a photograph and borrow from the

minds of Mercury and Silver to transform the glass of the photo frame into a mirror. So Mercury probably has transformative powers similar to Silver's.

Two other agents appear in the Big Finish audios. Although these stories aren't covered in this sourcebook, Gold (voiced by Mark Gatiss) is a Specialist with an affinity with vehicles but is impatient and even more detached than Steel, and Ruby (voiced by Lisa Bowerman) is dry and sardonic, with an innate understanding of time within musical rhythms and possibly a past romantic link with Steel.

Of the others confirmed to exist, we only know their names: Diamond, Radium, Bronze, Granite, Quartz, Uranium and Iron.

Speculative stats for these other confirmed elementals can be found in Appendix B (see page 85). They haven't been built as starting characters, but those with significantly higher points totals have had their Story Points reduced a little to compensate.

TRANSURANIC ELEMENTS

"Transuranic elements may not be used where there is life." In chemical terms, transuranic elements are those with an atomic number greater than 92, that of uranium. In *Assignment I*, Steel states that there are twelve transuranics. But, as there were one hundred and six known elements at that time and uranium is atomic number 92, there should have been fourteen of them. We can only speculate about this discrepancy. Was it simply

an arithmetical error on Steel's part, or did two of the transuranic elements in the then-current periodic table not have a corresponding elemental agent?

Transuranic elements are radioactive and unstable, decaying into other elements and not occurring naturally (with rare, trace exceptions in the cases of neptunium and plutonium). It's possible that transuranic elemental agents are similarly radioactive (though we know that agents with names taken from non-transuranic radioactive elements such as Radium can be used where there is life, so this isn't necessarily the case). Perhaps, like their chemical counterparts, they cannot survive long in our dimension and undergo rapid decay, dangerous to any nearby living beings. Alternatively, their instability might be what makes them dangerous, perhaps reflected in emotional or psychological instability as much as anything physical. They could be unpredictably violent or difficult to control, not reliable enough to carry out their missions without causing collateral damage.

Even though transuranic agents are rarely encountered in our reality, including one in an adventure could be interesting. But it's recommended that they're used rarely and only as NPCs, adding an extra complication for the Player Characters to have to deal with.

SAPPHIRE

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 4, Knowledge 5, Subterfuge 3, Technology 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Alien Senses – Has a wide variety of senses
Attractive
Brave
Charming
Clairvoyance
Elemental Agent
Empathic
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Precognition
Psychic
Psychic Training
Psychometry
Special – Time Manipulation (see text box)
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

TIME MANIPULATION
(Special Good Alien Trait)

Sapphire can manipulate time in a number of ways. At the more frivolous end of the spectrum, she can perform what might be termed parlour tricks. For example, using her ability to instantly change her hair or clothing to something from her recent past.

At a more practical level, Sapphire can also freeze time for an object or character, roll it back a few seconds or trap them in a short time loop (again, of no more than a few seconds) for so long as she doesn't take any other action.

Anything more than this requires the expenditure of Story Points. Sapphire has been seen to roll time back for longer periods, but the maximum seems to be two days. Doing so costs her a Story Point for every two hours (or part). Costs also apply to freezing time or setting up time loops for more than an individual object or character: 2 Story Points for a room, 4 for a building, 6 for anything larger. Sapphire needs to concentrate while putting these effects in place, usually taking a Round to complete. But once this is done, she is free to take other actions.

GMs and Players are free to come up with innovative uses of Sapphire's time manipulation, bearing in mind the above guidelines.

If Sapphire's use of her time manipulation is opposed by another entity or force, she needs to win a contest of Presence + Resolve.

If another character wishes to purchase Time Manipulation, it's a Special Good Alien Trait costing 4 Character Points.

STEEL

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**6**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 2, Fighting 3, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Science 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Armour (5 points)
Attractive
Brave
Eccentric (Minor) – Lack of emotions
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Special – Cold Steel (see text box)
Telepathy
Teleport
Weakness (Minor) – Steel's Armour doesn't protect him against heat or fire

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

COLD STEEL
(Special Good Alien Trait)

Steel is capable of reducing his body to sub-zero temperatures, almost to absolute zero if he needs to. At such extreme temperatures, his touch negates up to 10 points of Armour or similar protection and causes 8(4/8/12) points of damage, but his Coordination is reduced by 1 point.

It takes Steel a few minutes to get down towards absolute zero. Reducing his body temperature so far is draining for Steel. Afterwards, he needs to spend several hours recovering. He also needs an external source of heat to warm himself back up, otherwise he begins to take damage at 1 point per 10 minutes. Consequently, Steel often works with Lead in situations where his temperature control is needed, as Lead is an insulator and can protect him from the extreme cold.

If another character wishes to purchase Cold Steel, it's a Special Good Alien Trait costing 2 Character Points.

LEAD

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**8**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 2, Craft (Singing) 3, Fighting 2, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2, Technology 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Armour (5 points)
Brave
Charming
Elemental Agent
Environmental (Minor) – Extreme cold (the GM may also decide that Lead is also protected against radiation)
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Special – Insulator (see text box)
Telepathy

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

INSULATOR
(Special Good Alien Trait)

Like his chemical namesake, Lead is an insulator. By maintaining physical contact, he can extend the protection provided by his Environmental trait to other characters. It costs Lead 1 Story Point per character protected to do this.

Using his Insulator ability takes it out of Lead, and he needs to rest for several hours afterwards.

If another character wishes to purchase Insulator, it's a Special Good Alien Trait and can be linked to any version of Environmental, not just to those protecting against cold. If the Environmental trait it applies to is Minor, Insulator costs 1 Character Point; if it's Major, it costs 2 Points. Environmental is a prerequisite and must be purchased separately.

SILVER

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 3, Craft 4, Knowledge 2, Science 3, Subterfuge 4, Technology 5, Transport 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Boffin
Charming
Control (Minor) – Can operate electrical or mechanical devices remotely
Convert (see text box)
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Resourceful Pockets
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Teleport

EQUIPMENT
Small wallet of tools

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

CONVERT
(Major Good Gadget Trait)

Silver can manipulate objects and materials, transforming them into something else with his bare hands. Metal can be moulded into tools; add glass, plastic or other materials and he can create more complex devices.

Silver can also provide energy to simple objects such as lightbulbs, allowing them to work without any visible power source for a limited time.

If Silver uses this ability to create anything which has a trait, he must pay for that trait with Story Points. If it becomes a permanent Gadget, Silver's maximum Story Points are reduced in the usual way.

Convert is based on the Major Good Gadget Trait from *Defending the Earth: The UNIT Sourcebook*.

IRREGULARITIES

Irregularities are the threats to reality that Sapphire and Steel are assigned to handle. They represent Chaos to the elemental agents' Order. The irregularities most likely to return for repeat engagements are described in more detail in this chapter.

TIME

Time is the big bad of *Sapphire & Steel*. It seems to be a living, sentient, malevolent thing, but the concept of its nature is difficult for humans to grasp. Sapphire describes Time in terms that humans can understand as a corridor. It surrounds all things and it passes through all things. It can't be seen, and sometimes it's dangerous. This corridor might be equated with the time continuum.

The corridor of Time cannot be entered, not in any way that humans can comprehend. But sometimes Time can enter into the present. It can break in and take things, take people. We get a glimpse of what this appears like in *Assignment I*, when one wall of Helen's bedroom suddenly recedes into the distance. But this is just how human senses interpret what is happening.

The corridor is usually very strong. But sometimes in some places it becomes weak, like worn fabric. When there is pressure put upon the worn fabric, Time can break through and take what it wants.

Time is so nebulous a concept in *Sapphire & Steel* that it only appears as a shadowy presence or as a blinding light that even Lead struggles to stand against. More usually, we are shown its effects on reality, such as the stopping of clocks and the disappearance of people. It can also resist Sapphire's (and other elementals') attempts to manipulate time. We also see it manifested in Time's agents (see page 17) or its allies, or perhaps as different aspects of itself, such as the Darkness (see page 18).

Time seems to have different emotional states that motivate its actions and empower its abilities, such as hunger or anger or resentment. Stats for Time are provided on page 30, but its ambiguous nature means that they should be regarded as broad-brush guidelines only. Time is more usually described by the effects that it can cause during each incursion. It can be slowed or even stopped by very low temperatures, but usually only temporarily. Time can never be destroyed, merely temporarily defeated.

The light patches in *Assignment I* are described as fragments of Time, or perhaps more accurately as its scions or children. Their stats are found on page 31, but these can be boosted by Time itself. As with Time, their abilities should be tailored to each assignment. In *Assignment I*, for example, they can empower the ghosts, making them substantial and physically dangerous.

TIME'S AGENTS

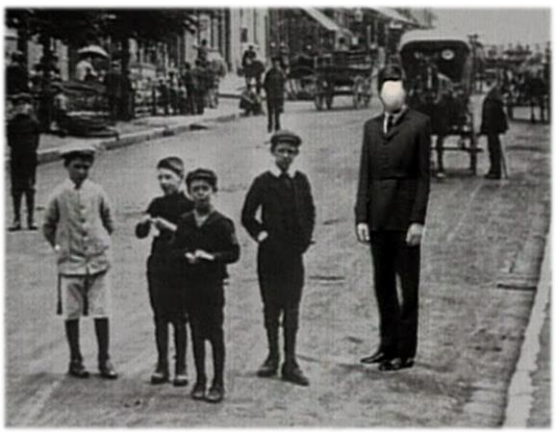
Over the course of the series, Time is seen to have numerous agents. These are a disparate group, including the ghosts (visual refractions) from *Assignment I* which can only assume physical form with the help of Time's scions, and the man without a face (otherwise known as the Shape) in *Assignment IV*, which can move from within two-dimensional photographs and into solid, three-dimensional reality and back.

Steel describes Time's agents as creatures from the very beginnings and the very ends of time. They have access to the corridor of Time and are forever moving along it, searching, trying to find a way into our reality. Like Time itself, their way in is via a trigger that causes a weakness in the fabric of the corridor. It could be an object, a person or an event that has affected Time.

Objects can become triggers by nature of their age or because they represent Time in some way, such as old photographs. People might become triggers due to their actions or emotions, again having an element of time, such as the ghost of the soldier *in Assignment II*, whose resentment is due to being killed eleven minutes after the Armistice at 11am on 11th November, 1918. And an event could become a trigger because of its relation to time, perhaps being an anniversary of an almost identical event, or a recreation of one, deliberate or otherwise, linking two points in time.

The nature of a trigger can sometimes influence how Time's agents appear, or perhaps it merely determines which types of agents can break through, like a summoning. In *Assignment I*, the visual refractions appear as a plague victim and Roundhead soldiers as their triggers are nursery rhymes whose origins relate to the Great Plague and the English Civil War respectively. In *Assignment IV*, the Shape can assume the form of anyone in any photo ever taken, but defaults to the man without a face.

In *Assignment V*, Time has even recruited a



human agent, someone who wishes to change history because of her doomed love.

THE DARKNESS

The nature of the Darkness is as vague and mysterious as that of Time. Steel describes it as a form of negative energy. It's likely that it's related to Time in some way, perhaps as an avatar or perhaps merely as another of its agents. But whatever the case, the Darkness has some sort of power over time. It can affect the flow of time, suspending it and even devouring it.

The Darkness is a parasite. It feeds on negative emotions such as hate, anger and especially resentment. It is drawn to those experiencing such emotions at the point of death, using them to create ghosts. These aren't ghosts in the supernatural sense, a concept that Steel scoffs at. He refers to them as "after images", and Sapphire explains that their personae live on in the atmosphere and only need to be activated. So perhaps they're more like recordings of the original people that the Darkness can activate, similar to stone tape theory. The Darkness can recreate the moment of these ghosts' deaths as traps for its opponents, placing them in a fatal situation that can kill them.

The Darkness appears only as an area of impenetrable shadow which expands as it consumes the physical reality around it. Anyone and anything consumed by this void is removed utterly from existence and devoured by the Darkness. Its presence is accompanied by the sound of a multitude of whispering voices.

Stats for the Darkness can be found on page 40 and for the ghosts on page 39.

TRANSIENT BEINGS

Transient beings are creatures with similar powers to those of the elemental agents, but they're believed to be locked in the past and cannot move forwards in time. They can change their shape and move anywhere, but

only in the past.

Although transient beings are similar to Sapphire and Steel, they may be more powerful. One of them at least is stronger than Steel and was able to overpower him with ease.

Sapphire believed that the transient beings answer to a higher authority than theirs. Both she and Steel revealed that they had been asked to work for them but declined. In *Assignment VI*, it's this higher authority that has enabled a group of transient beings to move forward to the present day, providing them with a time travel device to do so. Possibility it's planning to overthrow the elemental agents' own authority.

Transient beings represent a more concrete threat for the elemental agents to face. They seem to be naturally opposed to each other, as if they have an untold history. Could the transient beings be Operators who were originally based in the past, just as Sapphire and Steel are Operators based in the present? Perhaps Operators who have been turned by a "higher authority" and abandoned their posts?

What can we make of the name that Sapphire and Steel use for them? "Transient beings" implies that they are relatively short lived, perhaps only having a human lifespan, unlike the elementals whose lifespan is in the centuries at least.

Stats for the transient beings who appeared in *Assignment VI* are provided on pages 82-83 (but see the note in the sidebar for the Transient Being trait on page 81).

DEVISING ASSIGNMENTS

Sapphire and Steel's assignments tend to follow a standard pattern and include certain narrative and stylistic elements. This chapter provides guidance on including these to recreate a similar style in your own adventures.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Sapphire and Steel just arrive at the beginning of a story and depart at the end of it. We don't see anything of them outside the assignments, which helps preserve the mystery around who they are and where they come from. GMs are encouraged to similarly restrict gameplay to the adventures themselves rather than run sessions in the downtime between missions, which would lessen their mystique.

Additionally, the method of their arrival and departure is obscure. They just materialise from thin air and vanish into the ether again. This is probably not under their own steam, even for those elementals with the power of teleportation. If, as suspected, they come from beyond our reality, they need to be able to cross dimensions. More likely, it's the authority itself who sends and retrieves them.

IN MEDIA RES

Usually, something has already happened by the time that Sapphire and Steel arrive at a location to begin their investigation. They're rarely assigned *before* an irregularity has occurred. People have already disappeared, ghosts have already manifested, time is already askew.

In *Assignment IV*, Steel complains that somebody should have been assigned to wait at the junk shop, to be there before things happen. Sapphire counters that there aren't enough elementals for this, and even if there were, who would volunteer for such an

assignment? They would have to sit and wait, possibly for hundreds of Earth years.

BASE UNDER SIEGE

Base Under Siege is a term often used for a certain type of *Doctor Who* story, such as those in Season 5 (with the exception of the globe-spanning *The Enemy of the World*). These stories take place in a single location, usually remote or isolated in some way: the Cyber-tombs on Telos, a Tibetan monastery, a North Sea gas refinery. Although such a location isn't necessarily small, its extent is clearly defined.

Sapphire & Steel uses similar settings in all the televised stories: a remote house, an abandoned railway station, a sealed time capsule, a junk shop with flats above, a country mansion, and a service station locked within an unseen barrier. The location is limited in size. If it isn't already cut off from the outside world, Sapphire and Steel tend to isolate it themselves (for example, in *Assignment III*, by Steel rendering the lift inoperable). Even if this isn't done, they and the guest characters are rarely successful in attempting to leave the location. There's no sense that any outside force capable of dealing with the entities they face will come to aid them, even if it's possible to contact anyone.

A LIMITED CAST

With a limited location comes a small cast of guest characters (or NPCs), the sole exception being *Assignment V*. In *Assignment II*, this is pared down to a single human, Tully, plus the ghosts. The result is that Sapphire and Steel have few allies to call on. Those that are there are powerless against the forces that have been unleashed anyway.

The guest cast are largely there to provide additional information and context, and also to act as audience identification figures.

A limited cast allows the GM to focus on the characterisation of those few that there are, providing the Players (if not their PCs) more opportunity to understand them better and perhaps build up some connection with them. This gives any sacrifices that later have to be made greater emotional impact.

MYSTERIES TO SOLVE

When Sapphire and Steel arrive at the location, they usually have little idea as to what they will find there. Their mission briefings seem to be very limited, and they often don't even seem to know where or when they are.

This lack of information allows the viewer to discover what the situation is alongside Sapphire and Steel. All we know at the start is that there are irregularities to be handled, but precisely what they are remains to be seen. As a result, they and we (the viewers) need to experience a series of mysterious events so that the pieces can be put together.

What is wrong at this location for Sapphire and Steel to have been assigned? What is the cause, the trigger? And what needs to be done to deal with the situation? The answers to these questions aren't known to Sapphire and

Steel when they arrive, and neither should they be known to the Players at the start of the game. All they know is that they have been assigned and something needs to be put right.

(NOT SO) SUPERNATURAL EFFECTS

Clues to what is wrong are usually provided, initially at least, by its effects rather than the cause, and these often seem to be supernatural in character. Disembodied voices or snatches of whistling, spooky apparitions, creepy children who vanish into nowhere.

Of course, in the world of *Sapphire & Steel*, the supernatural doesn't really exist. Ghosts aren't true ghosts but are described in terms of being "visual refractions" or "after images". In *Assignment II*, Steel ridicules Tully for his spiritual beliefs. Nevertheless, these non-ghosts have the appearance of ghosts. The same would be true of apparent poltergeists or demons or any other seemingly supernatural entity.

Even in a story with a more science fiction feel, such as *Assignment III*, mysterious events occur apparently without any scientific cause. Naturally, there is an explanation; it's just that we don't yet know what that is.

Only through investigation and exposure to these mysterious events are Sapphire and Steel (or the Player Characters) able to work out what's happening and what they need to do.

ELEMENTS OF HORROR

For a TV programme with an early evening timeslot, *Sapphire & Steel* included a surprising amount of low-level horror. Well, perhaps not that surprising given some of the other programmes produced in the 1970s. Take *Children of the Stones*, for example, a children's serial from 1977 which was broadcast at 4.45pm, and whose opening titles and theme music alone were enough to give its younger viewers nightmares!

Sapphire & Steel isn't a horror series but it has its moments. The ghostly soldier's eerily whistling of a tune from the First World War in *Assignment II*, the reveal of the man without a face in *Assignment IV*, the burning alive of a woman trapped in a photograph later in the same story, and the gruesome effects of a deadly virus on a human in *Assignment V* are among the show's most memorable imagery. The GM should try to include similar moments in their games, including a few chills that carefully walk the line between fantasy and horror.

TRIGGERS

Most assignments require a trigger. This is an object, person, situation or event that has caused the irregularity and allowed Time or some other threat to break through or manifest, usually by linking the present with the past in some way, thus creating a weakness in the corridor of Time.

In the televised stories, triggers include such diverse things as the recitation of traditional nursery rhymes and a collection of old photographs. Often the trigger is something

from the past, and Steel is scornful of humans who like to collect old things without understanding the risk. But the future can also provide triggers, as the act of travelling through time (thus connecting two points) is enough to cause disruption.

Discovering what the trigger is should be one of the elementals' priorities. Finding out the cause of whatever they're investigating will usually provide them with additional information on the nature of their enemy and perhaps with options for how to deal with it. Sometimes simply destroying or disposing of the trigger will be enough. But other times, this is not possible or practical.

IRREGULARITIES

Irregularities are the threats that Sapphire and Steel and their fellow agents are assigned to neutralise. The previous chapter provides information on some of the more commonly encountered irregularities. But their precise nature is usually kept uncertain and difficult to pin down. Even their appearance is often left vague or perhaps changeable. They might just be shimmering lights, or they might be a hideous creature that's only briefly glimpsed, or they might have a different form each time they're encountered. The transient beings seem to be an exception as they're a more physical presence than most irregularities. But we're told that even they can change their shape.

This lack of certainty is also encouraged in the GM's games, in part because this makes it more difficult for the Players to catalogue their foes' strengths and weaknesses, but also because it fosters a fear of the unknown. If you're not really sure what that thing is, how can you tell just how dangerous it might be?

STORY DATING

Finally, the GM should give some thought to the date setting of their Players' adventures. Each of the following chapters on the TV stories includes a short section on this, indicating that they all take place from the late 1970s into the early '80s. *Sapphire & Steel* isn't a period drama, but there are differences between the era they were broadcast and set in and our modern world, which can impact on the feel of the game.

In *Sapphire & Steel* there are no smartphones. Even the most basic mobile phones don't appear in the UK until the mid-'80s, and only a couple of years earlier in the US. There are very few personal computers, no laptops, tablets or similar devices, and no publicly available internet. If *Sapphire & Steel* were updated to modern times, would these more recent inventions make the elemental agents' work easier by providing reliable means of immediate communication and information access? Or, as is more likely, would they bring their own problems by creating new triggers and providing Time with other routes into our reality?

ASSIGNMENT I

“There are things, creatures if you like, from the very beginnings of time and the very end of time. And these creatures have access to the corridor. They're forever moving along it. Searching, looking, trying to find a way in."

SYNOPSIS

An old house near Scar’s Edge, 1979

After dark in a remote house in the country, twelve-year-old Robert Jardine is in the kitchen doing his homework when his father’s collection of clocks all stop. Upstairs, his parents were reading bedtime nursery rhymes to his six-year-old sister Helen when they both vanished, leaving the two children alone.

Rob runs to the nearest phone box and calls the local police officer, who’s a ferry-ride away across the bay. After he gets back to the house, elemental agents Sapphire and Steel arrive to investigate, revealing that an evil force has spirited Rob and Helen’s parents away.

Sapphire and Steel discuss the age of the house and that there would have been older buildings on this spot. Also, the number of antiques and other old objects in the house could have created a pressure point here. Even a modern-seeming ashtray contains some recycled elements up to a century old.

In Helen’s bedroom, Sapphire and Steel reconstruct the events that led to the children’s parents disappearing. When Sapphire reads *Ring a Ring o’ Roses* from Helen’s book of nursery rhymes, as Helen’s mother was doing when they vanished, the breach reopens with one of the walls receding to form a long corridor. Phantoms from the time of the Great Plague appear before it can be closed again by saying the rhyme backwards. The elementals identify the force behind this as Time itself and that creatures from the beginning and end of time have

broken through. Whatever is in the corridor can take time forwards, backwards or even sideways.

Sapphire burns the page containing *Ring a Ring o' Roses*. But Helen slips back into her room and repeats it from memory to try to get her parents back. The elementals are alerted when the kitchen clock stops, and they hurry upstairs. Sapphire recites the rhyme backwards again, and Steel lets the breach take Helen's teddy bear. But Time is too strong, and they all have to retreat. Steel slams the door shut to stop Time's advance, but it has taken over the entire room, filling it with a blinding light.

In the morning, the police officer arrives in response to Rob's phone call. When Rob answers the door, Sapphire sets up a short time loop to prevent him telling the policeman what's been happening. Instead, Steel speaks to the officer and convinces him he's a friend of the family and that there's nothing wrong.

Steel places Helen's bedroom out of bounds and boards the door up. Rob helps him clear his father's study of all old objects, which empties it so that it can be used as a safe room.

Rob is lured up to the door of Helen's bedroom by the voice of his mother coming from inside the room. The voice persuades Rob to recite *Goosey Goosey Gander*, a trigger for phantom Roundhead soldiers to appear, marching up the stairs and forcing the door open. A patch of light (later described as a fragment or scion of the Time entity) escapes from the room before the door returns to being boarded up. The light enters a picture of an older building that used to be on the site of the house. Sapphire is pulled into the picture while two more light patches empower the Roundheads, who enter the painting and try to execute her, re-enacting an atrocity that occurred in the older building. She's rescued when Steel lowers his body temperature and freezes both the picture and the soldiers who emerge from it, forcing the light patches to leave them. Sapphire catches one and imprisons it in the house's freezer which Steel moved into the study. Although he boosted it to reach lower temperatures, the light patch soon starts trying to melt a way through the ice.

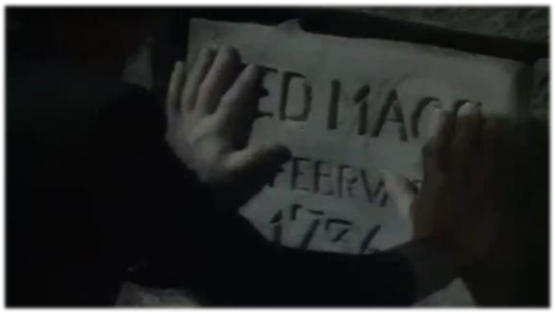
While Steel recovers from the effort of reducing his body temperature beside the kitchen fire, a third agent, Lead, arrives to help. He has worked with Sapphire and Steel on many occasions. Steel plans to freeze Time in Helen's bedroom back as far as the wall, with Lead as his insulation. Upstairs, Rob helps Lead remove the remaining pictures from the walls to prevent them transforming into more traps.

Downstairs, Helen is collecting old books for Sapphire to burn in the kitchen fire to prevent them being used as triggers. A book of nursery rhymes slips from the pile as though trying to avoid its fate, and its pages flutter open at T*he North Wind Doth Blow*. Sapphire rips out the page, but before she can burn it, it literally takes flight. The words of the rhyme get into Helen's head, and a storm begins both outside and within the house. Sapphire manages to catch the page as it flies around the room. When she burns it, the storm ends. Through the bedroom door, Lead hears Time repeating "*Poor thing, poor thing*" from the rhyme, as if it's just waiting.

The light patch escapes from the freezer and takes solid form as Rob's father. It lures Rob into the former study, allowing the two other patches to sneak down into the cellar while the agents are distracted looking for him. It then leads Rob down after them. A double of Rob's mother also appears in the cellar. But when Rob sees that her eyes are inhuman, he is spirited away into a scene of when the house's foundations were just being built.

The elementals head down into the cellar, where they make contact with Rob. They realise that he's near the foundation stone, the oldest part of the house, laid in 1736. Sapphire lures Time and its agents down into the cellar by leading Helen through the house while the girl is reciting *This is the House That Jack Built*.

Steel lowers his temperature to near absolute zero again. They all go through into the scenario Rob is trapped in and, when Time and its agents have entered the foundation stone, Steel freezes it and Lead crushes it with his great strength.



The house's clocks start again and the children's parents are returned with no memories of anything out of the ordinary having happened, as if no time had passed.

STORY DATING

Unspecified. The closest we get is that Steel suspects that a chair is forty or fifty years old and Sapphire dates it to 1938. Without any evidence to the contrary, a date around the year of broadcast is assumed.

TRIGGERS

Sapphire explains the main trigger as being a traditional nursery rhyme, *Ring a Ring o' Roses*, being spoken in Helen's bedroom. Reciting the rhyme opened a wall in the room, allowing Time to reach in and snatch the parents away. Repeating the rhyme in the room starts to open the wall again, revealing the corridor of Time and allowing a creature in the form of a plague victim access. Speaking the rhyme in reverse closes the breach, limiting further access. Opening the breach a third time allows Time to secure a bridgehead in the bedroom.

Other nursery rhymes act as triggers for other entities. On the stairs and top floor landing, *Goosey Goosey Gander* generates the ghosts of Roundhead soldiers from the English Civil War searching the house for the ungodly. Time can use the rhymes to get inside the children's heads like a meme until they are forced to say them aloud. But nursery rhymes can also be used against Time, as Sapphire and Steel did in the story's climax.

A book of nursery rhymes is also a trigger. It begins to act seemingly independently but actually under Time's control. A page containing *The North Wind Doth Blow* escapes being burned by Sapphire and creates a storm inside the house after planting the rhyme in Helen's head.

Finally, there is an implication that the sheer volume of other old things in the house, in particular the collection of clocks, would have enabled Time to break through even without

specific triggers. Perhaps the nursery rhymes act to attract the irregularities to weak spots such as the bedroom and stairs.

IRREGULARITIES

Time itself (see page 16) is the enemy in *Assignment I*, though it doesn't manifest directly. As is its usual *modus operandi*, it makes its presence known largely through its agents and in what it does, such as spiriting the children's parents away, stopping the clocks and, through its scions the light patches, transforming a picture into a trap. Its aim is to get from the breach in Helen's bedroom on the top floor of the house and down into the cellar, the oldest part of the house, where it can consolidate its presence in our reality. Steel explains that it made a mistake by entering at the top of the house, the newest part of the building.

Phantoms that Steel describes as creatures from the very beginnings and very ends of time, and Sapphire calls visual refractions, are able to enter our reality through the breach that has been created in the bedroom by the telling of nursery rhymes. They manifest most directly as Roundhead soldiers which, with Time's help, can become solid enough to be physical threats. As there were previous buildings on the site, the forms these refractions assume aren't limited to people who have lived since the construction of the house, which didn't commence until 1736. Steel can hold visual refractions off by reducing his body temperature and using it to freeze them, causing them to vanish, but this isn't a permanent solution and is dangerous to himself.

There are also more ambiguous entities that appear only as patches of light, which Sapphire describes in terms of them being scions or children of Time. The light patches often seem to act as scouts and spies for Time, but can merge with the visual refractions, making them solid and physically dangerous. They can also exert a limited mental control over characters, even taking possession of Rob at one point, or they can spirit them away into illusory environments, as they do when they transform a picture into a trap for Sapphire.

Two of the light patches become doubles of Rob and Helen's parents in order to lure Rob into the cellar, though the mother isn't a perfect copy and has glowing, inhuman eyes.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

There are hints in this story that Sapphire is a relative novice, with Steel her senior or mentor (Lead mentions her training). But after the first couple of stories, Sapphire and Steel have an equal standing, which gives Sapphire a subtle feminist vibe. It would be interesting for Players to be able to emphasise such a progression over several assignments.

Sapphire is able to unlock a door with her mind, which is not part of her core abilities. For this, she's using her Elemental Agent trait and spending a Story Point to use Open/Close.

Steel demonstrates some technical prowess (though not to Silver's standard) when he modifies the freezer. He also manages to persuade the policeman that there's nothing wrong, even though the officer received a call from Rob the night before to report that his parents have disappeared. We don't see the entire conversation, but either Steel spent Story Points to get a Fantastic result on his Convince roll or he used his Elemental Agent trait to buy Hypnosis for a scene.

Sapphire and Steel have a good relationship with Lead and have been on many assignments with him, including one on the *Mary Celeste*. Lead's loud and relaxed personality is the polar opposite of Steel's but they trust each other. Lead, being a Specialist, is happy for the Operators to take the lead.

The reference to the *Mary Celeste* could be interpreted to imply that the three elementals are more than a hundred years old (as the ship was found abandoned in 1872). However, this would be at odds with Sapphire still being a novice in this story. With intentional time travel being out of the question for elementals, it seems likely that the *Mary Celeste* incident involved them being somehow shifted back to 1872 by the forces they were up against, as also happens in *Assignment V*.

An alternative possibility is that Sapphire and Steel are from a dimension that exists outside of time and can be inserted into whatever period is required for their missions, but they can't travel through time while in our dimension. Normally, they only operate in the late 20th Century, but for some reason, they were assigned to deal with the *Mary Celeste* incident in 1872.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This story was written for children as P.J. Hammond initially expected it to have an earlier broadcast time than 7pm. Its tone is therefore aimed at younger viewers more than the subsequent stories are, and the audience identification figures are a pair of children rather than adults. Although there are moments undoubtedly creepy for children, the GM can up the chill factor for adult Players. The story is a haunted house mystery and can easily be expanded on with many of the classic tropes.

P.J. Hammond regarded the creation of a story's atmosphere as being more important than narrative logic. He also didn't plot an entire story out before writing, preferring the narrative to develop organically, and he often did not know how a story would be resolved until he got down to writing the final episode. As a result, in this story as in most if not all the *Sapphire & Steel* series, certain things are never explained. Some developments don't go anywhere and others are inconsistent with what has previously been revealed. The GM should be prepared for some things not to be

neatly wrapped up or explained to the Players. Any inconsistencies they spot may just be down to their Characters not having a good enough understanding of what has happened.

Identifying the trigger isn't a straightforward task for Sapphire and Steel in this assignment, as the house is full of old things: furniture, books, clocks, ornaments and pictures. As Sapphire notes, even the newer objects contain elements of older parts or materials, making any of them a possible trigger. Players will probably need a few pointers to identify the correct trigger. In the story, these clues are primarily provided by what the children witnessed.

The nursery rhyme *Ring a Ring o' Roses* is linked in this story to the Great Plague, a theory which is no longer believed to be correct, in part because the earliest known examples of the rhyme only date back to the early 19th Century. GMs with an eye for historical accuracy may wish to replace it with another nursery rhyme with links to violent or tragic historical events and adjust the ghosts accordingly. For example, *Three Blind Mice* is believed to refer to three Protestant bishops who conspired to overthrow Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary) and were burned at the stake for their troubles. Another option is *London Bridge is Falling Down*, one of whose possible origins relates to legends of an ancient practice of burying children alive in the foundations of bridges as a form of sacrifice to prevent them from collapsing. (Alternatively, it may be that the mere *belief* in the origin of *Ring a Ring o' Roses* is enough to summon the ghost of a plague victim.)

ROB JARDINE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

HELEN JARDINE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
None

TRAITS
Unthreatening (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Lead:** An elemental agent; very strong and can act as an insulator for Steel.

See page 14 for Lead's stats.

- **Rob Jardine:** Twelve years old. Protective of his sister. Initially distrustful of the elementals, but develops a crush on Sapphire.
- **Helen Jardine:** Six years old. Too young to understand what's going on. Wants her parents (and her teddy bear Becca) back.

8 FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Are the people that are returned to the house really Rob and Helen's parents, or has Time managed to fool Sapphire and Steel and substituted them with its agents?
- Perhaps the house has become a weak point and further breaches can be opened by the creatures from the ends of time, particularly given the number of old objects available as potential triggers.
- This story marks Lead's only screen appearance (though he pops up in the extracanonical *Look-in* comic-strips). Further assignments for him would provide opportunities to add more depth to his character and abilities. Lead becoming an Operator rather than a Specialist would allow him to be assigned to more missions.

TIME

AWARENESS	**7**	**PRESENCE**	**8**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**8**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**-**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 8, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Alien, Alien Appearance
Alien Senses
Dependency (Major) - Requires a trigger to enter and remain in our reality
Environmental (Major)
Fear Factor 3
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Immaterial
Immortal (Special) - Even if "killed", Time just retreats from our reality
Immunity - All physical damage
Indomitable
Networked (Major) – Its fragments and agents
Possess
Psychic
Special – Time Control: Has wide powers over time, though it's often limited to acting through its agents
Telepathy
Vortex
Weakness (Minor) – Cold can hold it back

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 12

VISUAL REFRACTION

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Fighting 2

TRAITS
Alien
Dependency (Major) – Requires a trigger to be able to enter and remain in our reality
Environmental (Minor) – Can survive in many hostile environments (though cold will stop them temporarily)
Fear Factor 2
Immaterial – Can be made tangible by Time or its fragments
Immunity – Immune to all physical damage
Networked (Major)
Shapeshift (Special) – Refractions can take on an appropriate appearance

EQUIPMENT
The 17th Century soldiers are armed with swords: Strength +2 damage

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 1-2

SCION OF TIME

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1/3***

SKILLS
Convince 3, Subterfuge 5

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Dependency (Major) – As visual refraction
Environmental (Minor) – Ditto
Fear Factor 1
Hypnosis (Minor)
Immunity – Immune to all physical damage
Invisible - Can phase in and out of visibility
Networked (Major)
Possess
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special) – Can copy a person's appearance (*Strength increases to 3), but requires a Good or Fantastic result to avoid errors
Special – Scion of Time: Can empower visual refractions or spirit people away into illusory environments (such as the picture trap)

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 3-5

ASSIGNMENT II

"Are they behaving the way your average ghost is supposed to behave? Would all your pals at psychical HQ classify them as good ghosts or bad ghosts?"

SYNOPSIS

Dewerton railway station, late October 1979

Sapphire and Steel arrive at night at a derelict railway station and meet George Tully, a ghost hunter from the Society for Psychical Research who has been here nearly two months hoping to make contact with a ghost.

On the platform, Sapphire senses that it's summer despite the date being late October, though Steel doesn't feel this. They go inside and check the station hotel's rooms. In one of the bedrooms, Sapphire's clothing briefly transforms into summer clothing from the 1910s.

Back outside, a patch of darkness materialises on the platform, coalescing into the figure of a soldier in First World War uniform. He's gone by the time Sapphire and Steel get there, but there are now summer flowers blooming in the station's planters.

Back in the waiting room, Steel questions Tully and is dismissive of both the ghost hunter's concept of ghosts and his methods. Tully says he's seen a piece of darkness, not quite a shadow, that's only been haunting this place since he started his investigation and discovered it. Although Tully believes it to be a ghost that needs his help, Steel tells him it represents a kind of negative energy.

Meanwhile, Sapphire has continued to investigate the station. She hears snatches of whistling and, back in the hotel bedroom, finds a fresh posy and four 11s written in the dust on a window. On the platform, it's a hot summer's day, but Sapphire senses a powerful atmosphere of hatred and resentment. Her clothing again transforms, while the sounds of marching feet and a band playing *Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag* can be heard

approaching. It's the sound of the big send-off of new recruits in the First World War.

The soldier appears again, and Sapphire becomes the girl who saw him off. She pins the posy she found to his jacket lapel. Through the soldier, she experiences the pain and terror of his death at the Front, and his resentment of the girls who sent him off to war.

Afterwards, Sapphire tells Steel that the soldier is a thing without life, an after image of a man who once lived. She tells Tully that the force using the soldier's appearance is not human. It just draws its power from the responses of humans, preferably of the dead and the worst human feelings: anger, resentment, hatred.

On the platform, a Second World War fighter pilot appears beside the soldier.

Steel discovers that voices have inexplicably appeared on Tully's tape recording from earlier in the evening, voices apparently of workers trapped in a sunken submarine and running out of air. On the platform, three men in overalls, the workers from the submarine, join the soldier and the pilot.

Up in the hotel bedroom, Steel suddenly finds himself in a pilot's uniform apparently in the cockpit of a fighter plane caught in a crash-dive. The aircraft's canopy is jammed shut, preventing him from bailing out. To save Steel from the pilot's fate, Sapphire takes time back to before the start of his vision.

By forcing Tully to join him in marching up and down the platform, banging metal buckets and loudly singing *Pack Up Your Troubles*, Steel tries to draw the ghost of the soldier out. But this only angers it, and it places Sapphire within the scenario of the stricken submarine running out of air. On the platform, Steel and Tully are subjected to the sights and sounds of a First World War battle. Fleeing inside, Tully is transported into Sapphire's submarine scenario. Steel finds them both unconscious in the hotel corridor and pulls them out of the affected zone.

Sapphire and Steel persuade Tully to conduct a séance in the station buffet to try to learn the soldier's name. Sapphire acts as medium and enters an auto-induced hypnotic state. She makes contact with the spirits of the men in the submarine. They were civilian workers who died during sea trials in 1938, but they won't divulge their names. Their resentment is because they died even though they weren't sailors, who might have had a reasonable expectation of death.

Sapphire then makes contact with Eleanor, the girl who saw the soldier off to war. She had been his teacher and was twelve years his senior. She's afraid of something here, a darkness that's using the grievances of the ghosts. Eleanor names the soldier as Sam Pearce. He was killed eleven minutes after the ceasefire

at 11am on 11th November 1918, the fourth 11 Sapphire saw in the dust on the window. This is the source of his resentment.

To stop the elementals learning more, the Darkness encroaches on the room, forcing them to flee with Sapphire still in a trance. A phantom version of her appears on the platform alongside the ghosts.

Steel goes to the buffet to speak to the phantom Sapphire, who tells him that their briefing was wrong and that the Darkness and the ghosts are harmless. She says that others are coming and when they're here, they'll all leave. As they speak, the Darkness again encroaches on the room, and "Sapphire" and the ghosts surround Steel. He's forced towards the exit to the platform, but in the doorway he's caught in barbed wire as Sam Pearce was, dying on the Western Front.

In the waiting room, Tully has been looking

after the real, still sleeping Sapphire. When the Darkness encroaches, Tully tells it he'll leave if it lets him live. But it won't let him take Sapphire with him or rescue Steel from the barbed wire. As he escapes over the footbridge, Tully sees the pilot's ghost re-enacting the moment he was turned down for a place on a sortie, the final one he needed to complete before his leave. Instead, he had to fly a death-trap. On the platform, more ghosts appear. The Darkness now engulfs the footbridge, sealing the station off.

Sam Pearce taunts Steel then leaves him. When Steel wakes, it's morning. The barbed wire has vanished and there are cobwebs across the doorway and dust on the furniture. Sapphire also wakes and determines that they've been shunted forwards twelve days in time. The Darkness, the ghosts and the sense of resentment have all left.

Tully appears, materialising out of nowhere. He apologises for abandoning Sapphire and says that after crossing the footbridge, he fell asleep and has only just woken. When Tully tries to leave, Steel immobilises him with a touch and accuses him of making a deal with the Darkness.

Steel has Sapphire make contact with the Darkness twelve days in the past so that he can negotiate a deal. He also checks that Tully has no family.

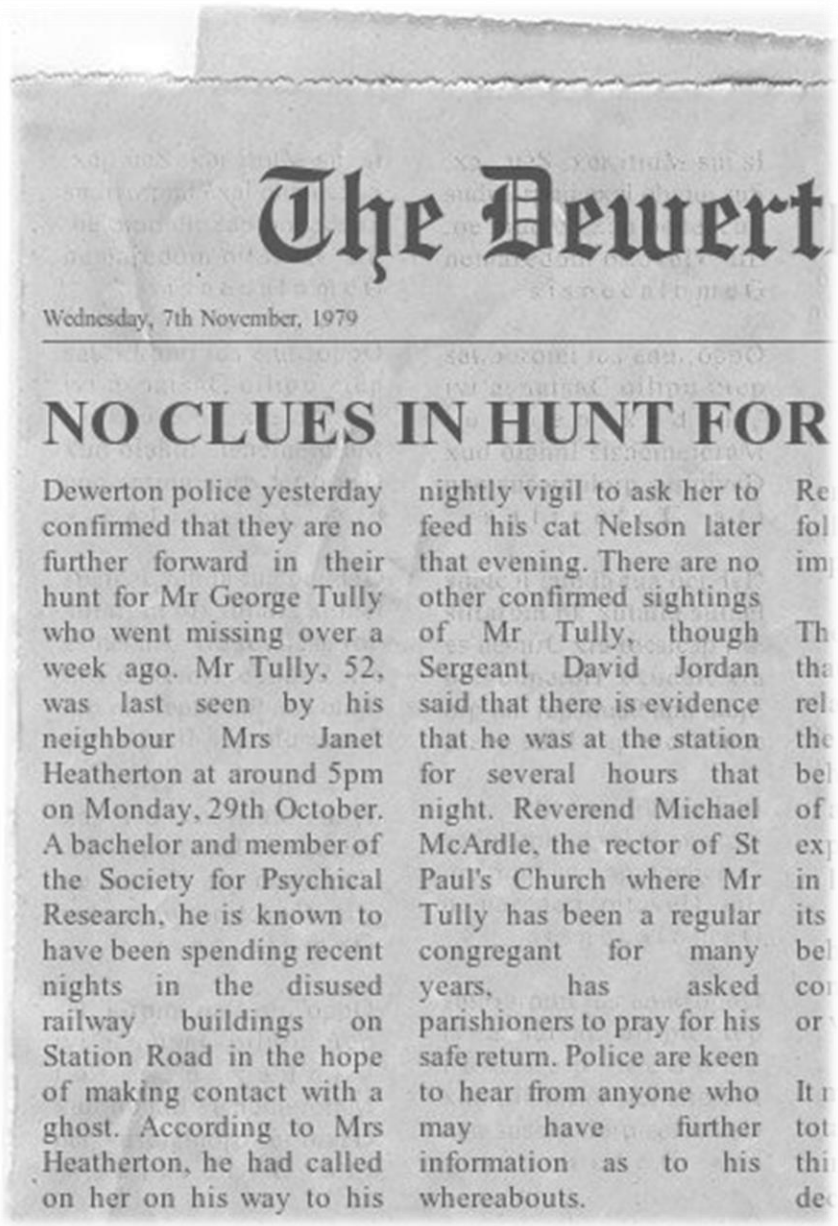
Twelve days in the past, many ghosts have gathered on the platform. They make way as the Darkness approaches, pausing at the footbridge, the halfway point between its time and the elementals', before crossing over and possessing Sapphire's body. Steel makes his proposal. He knows that the Darkness thrives on resentment and offers it an original source, enough to last for five hundred or even a thousand years. But only if it takes all three of

them back twelve days to their proper time. The Darkness agrees and releases Sapphire.

To avoid any traps, Steel persuades Sapphire to hold time for a day, so that they jump off at eleven days rather than the full twelve. When they arrive, the ghosts are still on the platform and the Darkness is still present in the station. Steel has Tully wait on the footbridge.

Sam Pearce appears and tells Sapphire and Steel the ghosts will be going soon. The Darkness has promised them new lives so that they can live again. Sapphire tells him that it can't be done as it needs their resentment.

Instead, it will take them back and start with Sam all over again. He will go round again and again, stuck here forever unless Steel goes ahead with his deal.



The Dewert

Wednesday, 7th November, 1979

NO CLUES IN HUNT FOR

Dewerton police yesterday confirmed that they are no further forward in their hunt for Mr George Tully who went missing over a week ago. Mr Tully, 52, was last seen by his neighbour Mrs Janet Heatherton at around 5pm on Monday, 29th October. A bachelor and member of the Society for Psychical Research, he is known to have been spending recent nights in the disused railway buildings on Station Road in the hope of making contact with a ghost. According to Mrs Heatherton, he had called on her on his way to his nightly vigil to ask her to feed his cat Nelson later that evening. There are no other confirmed sightings of Mr Tully, though Sergeant David Jordan said that there is evidence that he was at the station for several hours that night. Reverend Michael McArdle, the rector of St Paul's Church where Mr Tully has been a regular congregant for many years, has asked parishioners to pray for his safe return. Police are keen to hear from anyone who may have further information as to his whereabouts.

The Darkness arrives and possesses Sapphire again, showing Steel a vision of her mutilated face to ensure his cooperation. Steel offers it Tully, who should otherwise live for another five years. This change to future history will cause havoc in high places, and Tully's resentment over his five lost years will provide the Darkness with enough sustenance for five hundred. The Darkness agrees and releases Sapphire.

Tully has overheard Steel but goes up over the footbridge and is consumed by the Darkness.

With the Darkness sated, the ghosts have left. Sapphire and Steel depart.

STORY DATING

Sapphire says it's late October. Steel tells Sam, who died on 11th November 1918, that he's over sixty years too late. So 1979, the year of broadcast, seems likely.

TRIGGERS

It's the ghosts' hatred and resentment at their untimely and unfair deaths that has enabled the Darkness to bring them back.

There's also the railway station itself, a place now abandoned but from where many British Tommies said farewell to their loved ones sixty years before and never returned. This could well have made the location a focus of psychic energy enabling the Darkness to manifest in this place.

Finally, could Tully's vigil at the station over several weeks and his attempts to contact the dead have also acted as a trigger? Tully believes that the patches of shadow he's glimpsed have only appeared since he started his nightly watch at the station. Steel replies that cranks like him make things worse and increase the danger by interfering.

8 IRREGULARITIES

The Darkness (see page 18) which has infiltrated the railway station is the primary irregularity. As with Time, what it actually is remains vague and uncertain, and it's too nebulous to tackle physically. Unlike Time, it can be bargained with so long as its hunger can be sated.

The Darkness is the source of the ghosts at the station. It's also a direct threat, being able to possess elementals (and presumably humans), devour people, objects and even space and time. At one point it fills a room with its nebulous substance, rendering it a black void (though when it withdraws, the room returns). The Darkness can also affect time, consuming minutes or hours, and shunting Sapphire, Steel and Tully forwards by twelve days.

The Darkness feeds on negative emotions like resentment, which is also the source of its power over the ghosts. It has promised them new lives, but this is a lie. Once it has fed on their resentment, it will take them all back in time to the beginning of the cycle and start again. Only when it obtains a new source will it release them.

Perhaps the Darkness's most dangerous power is that of generating psychic illusions. It is even able to recreate the events of its ghosts' deaths with another character experiencing them as if it were them. At one point, Steel finds himself apparently trapped in a plummeting World War Two fighter plane, and later he's caught in barbed wire and dying on the Western Front as Sam Pearce did. These are illusory events but they feel real enough to cause injury and even death.

The ghosts are secondary irregularities, despite being the most obvious ones initially. But given Steel's lack of belief in such things as spirits and souls, they're unlikely to be supernatural as we normally understand the term. We're told that they're created from after images of the personae that persist in the atmosphere and can be reactivated. This is presumably how Sapphire manages to contact the spirit of Eleanor during the séance, as she isn't a creation of the Darkness. It sounds very similar to stone tape theory, which holds that impressions of highly emotional or traumatic events can be "recorded" by the local environment and replayed under certain conditions, creating what we perceive to be ghosts. The after images here though aren't

merely repeating a previous sequence of events but seem to have sentience and free will.

Because of their creation by the Darkness, or perhaps because of their anger and resentment, the ghosts represent a form of negative energy. But they're not the Darkness's slaves and might be reasoned with. They've been offered the opportunity of life by the Darkness, but some are also afraid of it and what it represents. Private Pearce acts as the ghosts' primary mouthpiece.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

It still feels as if Sapphire is subordinate to Steel in this story, with Steel ignoring many of the suggestions she comes up with (and making mistakes as a result), though the balance has already shifted towards a more equal status.

There's also a hint of possible romance between the pair. Steel, normally lacking much emotion, even says that he has grown to love his partner. This might just be the love of close friends rather than anything more romantic, but they also share a couple of (admittedly chaste) kisses.

Steel exhibits powers beyond his core abilities (by spending Story Points with his Elemental Agent trait) when he freezes Tully in his tracks merely by touching him. Tully is frozen in place (but can still talk) until Sapphire releases him.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This assignment has a decidedly more adult feel to it than the previous one, P.J. Hammond having realised that he's writing for a family audience, though one which still includes children. The ghosts are suitably creepy and there are genuine moments of shock: Sapphire's eyes turning solid black as she's possessed by the Darkness and the mutilation of her face, for example.

But the chills are more usually provided by the slow-burning, brooding menace of the ghosts and of the station itself, rather than by jump-scares. *Sapphire & Steel*, like most dramas of its time, was slower paced than we're used to today. It made an effort to generate an atmosphere in which ghost stories are spooky rather than truly frightening – though there are some scary moments nonetheless. Fear of the unknown, in this case the unknown of what the ghosts actually are and what they can do, is a potent one, as is the fear of facing an incomprehensible and potentially unbeatable enemy. The atmosphere is enhanced by such things as snatches of Sam's eerie whistling of *Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag* and the mysterious appearance of the voices on Tully's tape. The GM should try to create a similar atmosphere as well as a smattering of jump-scares.

CONDUCTING A SÉANCE

In the world of *Sapphire & Steel*, ghosts and spirits are the personae that persist in the atmosphere after death and can be summoned by a séance. Tully says that he conducted a séance by himself when he started his vigil, but it was unsuccessful as he's not very "mediumistic". Sapphire, however, makes a very good medium.

To conduct a séance successfully, the participants sit in an unbroken circle holding each other's' hands while the medium places themself in an auto-induced hypnotic state, a trance, which makes them susceptible to contacting a spirit.

If trying to contact the spirit of a particular person, the séance needs to take place in a location with a connection to the deceased, or alternatively involving a person or object with a connection to them. The medium must make a successful Presence + Convince roll at a Difficulty level of 18 if they have the Psychic trait, or 21 if not. The GM may vary the Difficulty level depending on the environment and circumstances. Traits such as Empathic and Psychic Training add cumulative +2 bonuses to the medium's roll. If the spirit is resistant to being contacted, the medium has a -4 penalty.

A standard Success means that a spirit has been contacted but it's uncooperative or uncommunicative; a Good result means that a cooperative spirit has been contacted; and a Fantastic result means that the medium is possessed by that spirit, allowing it to use the medium's voice to speak directly.

A standard Failure means that no spirit has been contacted; a Bad result means no contact and the medium must sleep the experience off; and a Disastrous result means a hostile entity possesses the medium.

Physical danger is provided by the Darkness itself with its ability to consume anything. But rather than a quick death, the characters should be put through the emotional wringer by its ability to place them in the death scenes of various ghosts. Steel hanging from the barbed wire or in the fighter plane and Sapphire seeming to be trapped in the submarine not only put them in real danger but can also act as a means for the GM to impart clues and information to the Players.

The story's ending is the most shocking development in the series so far, as Steel sacrifices the innocent Tully to the Darkness in order to satiate it. Would Player Characters assigned to this story be ruthless enough to do the same? Would they consider Tully truly innocent if they knew he had previously struck a deal with the Darkness to save his own life? This development provides an excellent opportunity for emotional roleplaying with the PCs arguing over the morals of what they need to do. Would they be able to work out an alternative solution to the problem of a seemingly unbeatable enemy? Perhaps the GM should offer clues to an alternative resolution, even if the Players ultimately choose to ignore them. Could they turn the anger of the ghosts towards the Darkness perhaps?

It's unclear whether the Darkness remains at the station, sated and dormant for the next five hundred years after consuming Tully, or whether it departs. When Sapphire and Steel are shunted forwards twelve days in time, the corrugated metal sheets which have been

covering the station's doors and windows are gone. There's no explanation provided for this, nor any comment about it whatsoever. It seems unlikely that anyone would have come to the station to remove them in those few days, when the station seems to have been boarded up for years. So, could the corrugated sheets have been the work of the Darkness itself, perhaps a psychic construct to obscure its own presence? At the end of the story, when Sapphire and Steel depart, the metal sheets are back in place, possibly indicating that the Darkness is still there, waiting out the next five centuries after which it will need to feed again.

GEORGE TULLY

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 3 (AoE: The Paranormal), Technology 1

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd
Friends (Minor) – The Society for Psychical Research
Insatiable Curiosity

EQUIPMENT
His ghost-hunting equipment

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

GHOST

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Fighting 2, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Fear Factor 2
Immunity - All physical damage
Immaterial – But can become tangible
Indomitable
Invisible (Special Good) – Can fade in and out of visibility

EQUIPMENT
Private Pearce carries a rifle: 7(5/7/10) damage

TECH LEVEL: generally 4 (but may vary)
STORY POINTS: 2-4

THE DARKNESS

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**6**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Fighting 3, Knowledge 4

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Alien Senses – Negative emotions
Fear Factor 3
Immaterial
Immortal (Special)
Immunity - All physical damage
Indomitable
Invisible (Special) – Difficult to see in the shadows
Possess
Psychic
Psychic Illusions
Size: Huge (Minor) – But grows as it feeds
Special – Consume Reality: Anyone and anything engulfed by the Darkness is destroyed utterly, including time itself
Special – Create Ghosts: Can create ghosts from their residual personae

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 10

PSYCHIC ILLUSIONS (Special Good Trait)
Prerequisite: Psychic

Characters with this trait are able to generate illusory visions with their minds. Purchasing it costs 1-4 Character Points.

For 1 Character Point, they can generate purely visual illusions. For 2 Character Points, they can generate illusions complete with appropriate sound, smell and taste. For 3 Character Points, they can generate illusions complete with sound, smell and taste, and which also feel solid. Illusions are interactive within the limitations of the senses they include, but complex interaction such as holding a conversation requires concentration by their creator. Illusions are normally incapable of causing damage or injury; if they can, this trait costs an additional point.

When an illusion is first generated or seen, the character must succeed at a contest of Presence + Convince against anyone observing it, otherwise the observer notices a flaw and isn't convinced by it. An illusion continues for a single scene unless its creator dismisses it, and a new contest of Presence + Convince must be made at the start of each new scene if the creator wants it to continue.

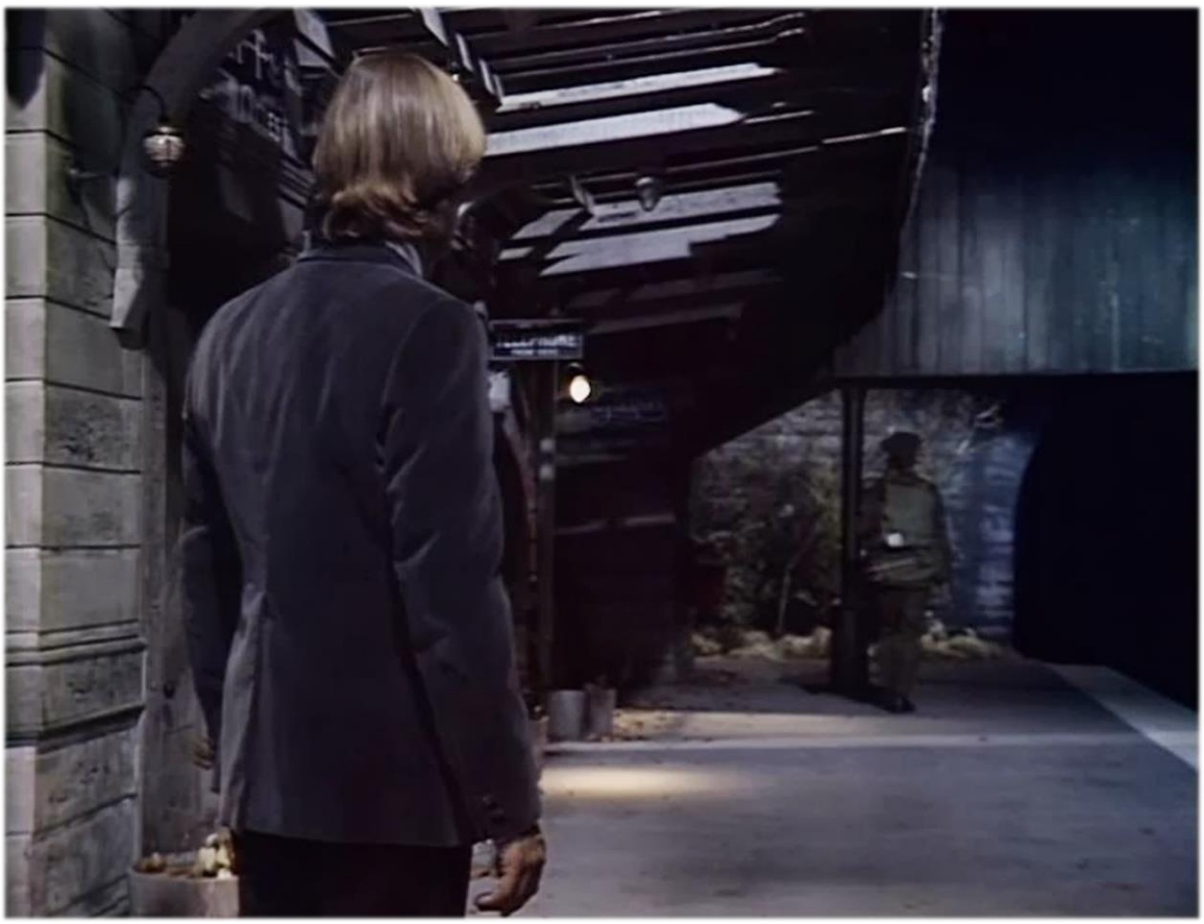
Among other things, the Darkness uses this trait to create illusions of its ghosts' deaths, but with a character replacing the original victim. Unless the character can break free, they will suffer the ghost's fate and die. The character can make additional rolls to break the illusion by spending a Story Point per attempt, or the illusion can be broken if others come to their aid (as when Steel physically carries Sapphire and Tully out of the area of corridor doubling as the stricken submarine).

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **George Tully:** 52 year old bachelor. Ghost-hunter and member of the Society for Psychical Research. Has strong Christian beliefs. Takes a dislike to Steel (who derides and even bullies Tully), but is sweet on Sapphire.
- **Private Sam Pearce:** Ghost of a soldier killed eleven minutes after the end of the First World War. Harbours strong resentment for the injustice of his death and wants to live again, but is also a little afraid of the Darkness.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- If the Darkness is still lurking in the station, lying dormant as it feeds on Tully's resentment, what will happen when the buildings are demolished, as they surely will be long before five hundred years are up?
- Has poor Tully been totally devoured by the Darkness? It would be interesting for the Players to encounter him as another of the Darkness's ghosts, full of resentment for his enforced sacrifice.
- Tully was a member of the Society for Psychical Research, a real-life organisation which would be very interested to learn of the existence of elementals. Members of the SPR trying to investigate them could form the core of an adventure or just a distraction from an otherwise unconnected assignment.



ASSIGNMENT III

"The scientists of the future, fifteen hundred years in the future, what are they guilty of?"

SYNOPSIS

A time capsule on top of a London tower block and a second one in the country, January 1980

In a seemingly normal apartment at the top of a tower block, a family of three – Rothwyn, Eldred and their baby - are living seemingly normal lives. Except that the mother, Rothwyn, narrates what she does and reports a failure in supplies of nutrition to a glowing pattern that appears on the wall of each room, as though it's monitoring them.

Meanwhile, Sapphire and Steel have been assigned to investigate time travellers from the future who are operating within the tower block. They've searched every room of every floor and found nothing, even though the time travellers have been here eighty-six days already. The attack their briefing mentioned can't have started yet or it would be obvious. When they break into the topmost apartment, they find it deserted and unfurnished. Sapphire detects that the family are above them, on the roof.

When Rothwyn holds a leg of lamb to demonstrate how an evening meal is prepared in the 20th Century, she sees a vision of a slaughterhouse and hears the cries of animals. Sapphire senses that the attack has started! Shortly after, a pillow stuffed with feathers

seems to come to life in Rothwyn's hands, squawking like an aggressive bird and attempting to smother the sleeping Eldred. Other objects move of their own accord: a tortoiseshell box, a fur coat, the leg of lamb and another pillow in the baby's nursery.

Rothwyn can't get a reply from whoever is on the other end of the monitor. She tells Eldred what she experienced earlier, but he believes they're hallucinations, particularly as she has been trained to sense things.

Sapphire and Steel find the roof to be empty, but they discover an invisible barrier. Sapphire determines that it's the exterior wall of a time capsule from fifteen hundred years in the future, which houses the hidden apartment. While Steel is feeling his way around the edge of the capsule, a pillow from inside materialises as a swan that almost pushes him off the edge of the roof. Inside, a second swan appears in the baby's cot before Rothwyn strangles it. Both birds vanish.

The elementals find the capsule is sealed. Steel prevents the tower block's lift coming up further than the eighth floor by tying a knot in the cable.

Hidden within a wall in the apartment, a foetus is gestating. Rothwyn tells Eldred about the swan and that she's been having urges to leave the capsule. She insists that Eldred contact the two other time capsules, but when he does, both seem to be empty.

Unseen by either adult, the thing in the wall ages their baby to adulthood. Outside, Sapphire senses the change and that a crystallised unit of time is inside the capsule. It's not entirely a machine, but it's what brought the family here and has turned against them. When she tries to scan it, Sapphire vanishes.

A third elemental arrives: Silver, a technical expert in communications and machines. He seems to have had a more thorough briefing and tells Steel about the other two capsules, one rural and the other provincial, but that they don't matter anymore.

The now adult "Changeling" explores the apartment under the telepathic instructions of the thing in the wall. Its touch either reverts objects back to their constituent materials or ages them to destruction. When its parents find it, the Changeling touches Rothwyn.

Sapphire finds herself in the rural group's capsule and makes mental contact with Steel.

She finds a glass that has reverted to its original silicate state. She also discovers that the family here are all dead, apparently having killed themselves.

Silver constructs a device to get all three elementals into the main capsule and reunite them. They all pass through its defensive time field and appear in the communications room. Sapphire senses only one living being is present now, though the external windows and doors are still sealed. They find the remains of objects that the Changeling has destroyed, similar to the glass in the rural capsule.

In the living room, they encounter the Changeling, who has learned to speak and, under its controller's instruction, tells them about the project to study the late 20th Century. Silver believes the Changeling is a machine, but when he tries to examine it, it touches him with its left hand and Silver vanishes, sent back to his beginnings or maybe even further! When the time-source in the wall orders the Changeling to touch Sapphire and Steel as well, it refuses and retreats back to the nursery.

Sapphire tries to take time back to before Silver vanished, but the time-source is too strong and prevents her. She does, however, locate its position in the wall. She senses its pain and sees blood on her hand.

Steel goes to talk to the Changeling. While Sapphire distracts the thing in the wall with her own blood, Steel pushes the Changeling's hands together, reverting it to being a baby and restoring everything it had touched, including Rothwyn, Eldred and Silver.

Silver opens up the wall cavity and discovers that the time-source inside includes organic matter and components used in surgical procedures or vivisection.

Despite Eldred's concerns over personal privacy, Steel coerces him into accessing the log of the rural capsule. They learn that the time unit turned on the family there and wanted them to become a threat to the past and the future, a threat to the human race. So the family killed themselves to prevent it.

Sapphire's analysis of blood from the bio-unit reveals that it's not from one kind of animal but all animals. Eldred and Rothwyn inform the elementals that there are no animals in the future; there is no further use for them and nobody from their time would even contemplate eating them. Animals are considered unclean and cruel, carriers of disease. The only creatures left are just pieces kept alive in scientists' laboratories.

The bio-unit has been created from pieces of animals and given power over time. It brought the capsules back. Now it wants just one thing: revenge on humanity for what has been done to the animals.

In the hallway, a silvery grey living thing breaks free of the controlling machinery. Steel tracks its bloody trail and sees it in the baby's cot. Before he can kill it, Sapphire realises it's just an illusion and prevents him from attacking the baby. Steel then sees Sapphire as a horrific doll and tries to strangle her.

Steel tells Silver to send an emergency signal to the experiment's controllers in the future. He

then lures the creature back into the machinery in the wall with the leg of lamb, leaving it there to feed. Sapphire, Steel and Silver teleport out of the capsule, which returns to the future where the scientists will have to deal with the creature.

STORY DATING

Rothwyn states in her report to the monitoring device that it's January 1980.

TRIGGERS

Sapphire and Steel are already aware of the trigger before they arrive. They've been told that there are time travellers from the future in 1980, and that, as nobody should mess with time (except themselves, apparently) they need to be stopped. It seems that not only are the people themselves in danger, but time itself is too. Precisely what the latter means is unclear. Danger of creating paradoxes maybe, or of negating their own future? Or perhaps danger of weakening the temporal corridor and attracting Time (with a capital T)?

IRREGULARITIES

The main threat in this story is the capsule's bio-unit, a living, part-animal control unit with time travel capability. It is installed in the wall of the time capsule, but during the course of the assignment, it grows itself a more mobile body, a silvery thing that's no single, discernible species.

The bio-unit controls the capsule and its interior environment, and monitors everything from devices hidden within the walls of each room, which glow when active. It is psychic and can inflict psychic illusions on anyone in or near to the capsule, usually manifesting as illusory creatures or visions of pain and death being inflicted on animals. These illusions are capable of injuring or killing characters. It also manipulates Steel's perception so that he sees the baby as the monstrous creature and Sapphire as a creepy doll. As the capsule on the tower block (the urban study group) is the main one, the bio-unit also has control over the capsules of the rural and provincial study groups which were also sent back to this year.

The bio-unit is fitted with a crystal of time energy, which is what brought the capsule back to 1980. It is also how the bio-unit is able to accelerate the baby's growth into adulthood and give it the power to age or rejuvenate people and objects.

The Changeling is the result of the bio-unit ageing Rothwyn's baby by around thirty years. It becomes a tall, gangly man with curly brown hair and remarkable strength, presumably enhanced by the bio-unit, as it almost overpowers Steel. At first, the Changeling still has a baby's mind and cannot make sense of what has happened to it, but it soon learns to speak. Its left hand reverses time to transform whatever it touches into their constituent materials, and its right hand accelerates time, destroying or killing on contact. But it is uncoordinated, and it can easily be distracted by lullabies or babies' toys.

A final thought on the irregularities: we're told the bio-unit has been given control over time, but is Time (with a capital T) actually behind the events of this story?

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

The introduction of Silver changes the dynamic between Sapphire and Steel. Silver and Sapphire have a flirtatious relationship which Steel clearly finds irritating and is perhaps jealous of.

Steel being able to pull the lift up its shaft and tie a knot in the cable clearly requires Strength greater than his usual rating of 6. This is again achieved by spending Story Points with his Elemental Agent trait (in this case buying the Attribute or Augment traits to boost his Strength for a scene).

At the climax of this story, there's an odd reversal of Sapphire and Steel's usual attitudes to the humans they meet. Steel is concerned they're putting Rothwyn and Eldred at risk as they're sending them back with the creature still in the time capsule. Sapphire, however, is of the opinion that they (or rather the scientists of their future) caused the problem so they must solve it. It's a reversal that occurs again in *Assignments V* and *VI*.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This assignment has a radically different feel to it than that of the previous two stories. Gone are the ghost story atmosphere and gloomy lighting, replaced with science fiction concepts and bright lights. This is also the only story that utilised location filming (the roof of the tower block) and a second location remote from the first (the rural study group's capsule). As a result, there's a less claustrophobic feel to proceedings, at least until the agents get inside the capsule.

The menaces the elementals face are different in style too. Instead of metaphysical threats, there are more tangible dangers, though it becomes clear that some at least are illusory. Steel is almost pushed off the top of the tower block by an illusory swan; Rothwyn is attacked by a pillow that comes to life as another large bird; and the elemental agents have to contend both with the Changeling, capable of wiping them out of existence, and the bio-unit's mobile body, a silvery creature that's ravenously hungry for flesh.

There are still mysteries to solve though, and the GM needs to provide sufficient clues for the Players to be able to solve them. The first one is exactly where are the people who are carrying out the time experiments? Once their invisible capsule has been found, how can it be entered? Sapphire and Steel's teleportation

doesn't seem to work to get them into the capsule (at least, it's not considered as a possible option). So the assistance of Silver or another elemental with specialist expertise is needed to bypass the capsule's security and get them inside.

Actually, there's an implication that Silver might have already had some involvement with one or both of the other time capsules, as he already knows that its occupants are dead. This isn't something that Sapphire and Steel have been briefed on. There's an opportunity for the GM to run a pre-credits scene around this for one or more of the Players.

Sapphire being sent on a side journey to the capsule of the rural study group is needed to provide further clues, in particular the bodies of the family here who have died by their own hands, driven to suicide by… what? She finds the remains of a glass that has been reverted to its component minerals, indicating that they also had to deal with something similar to the Changeling. What has happened to this?

In terms of story structure, it takes Sapphire and Steel until episode 4 even to get into the time capsule, and it's the end of episode 5 before they deal with the Changeling and meet Rothwyn and Eldred, leaving only the final episode to work out what's happening and confront the bio-unit. So once the Players actually get inside the capsule, the adventure could be wrapped up very quickly, perhaps unsatisfactorily so. The GM might wish to add one or two further complications. One possibility would be to have the elementals arrive at one of the other time capsules while its family is still alive, so they need to deal with events there before tracing the root of the problem to the main capsule.

A key aspect of this story is the morality of the future scientists and humanity in general, having driven animals to extinction in the wild, subjecting them to vivisection and other cruelties, and reducing them to a few living organs surviving in laboratories. Even Steel is disgusted by this, and the solution to the problem of the time experiments is merely to send the capsule and its people, along with the hostile bio-unit, back to the future, where they'll have to sort things out for themselves.

In addition to the obvious animal rights and anti-vivisection messages, there's a secondary strand of social commentary about the rising influence of media. The set-up of the family within the sealed capsule predicts TV reality shows like *Big Brother* – though Nigel Kneale had already done this over a decade earlier with *The Year of the Sex Olympics*. The family seem to be under constant video surveillance, and Rothwyn even goes into a side room to talk to the monitor in the style of *Big Brother* contestants in the diary room, her reports presumably being relayed to whoever is watching in the future. More emphasis could be placed on this angle in a game situation, as it seems almost an afterthought in the TV story.

In fact, although Rothwyn and Eldred believe they've been sent back to observe the 20th Century, there is actually very little of scientific value that they could learn from the safety of their hermetically sealed capsule. The future scientists may as well have sent an unmanned probe. Could it be that, rather than *carrying out* the experiment, the family groups in each of the three capsules are the *subjects* of the experiments without their knowledge? It seems more likely that whoever is monitoring them from the future is assessing their psychological and physiological reactions, possibly to determine whether it's viable for the people of their own time to colonise the past, perhaps as a solution to overcrowding. If so, could the hostile bio-unit actually be a deliberate part of the experiment, presenting a threat to try to force the otherwise agoraphobic inhabitants of the capsules to venture outside? The GM could change the focus of this assignment to the possibility of a quiet invasion from the future, with the bio-unit being only a preliminary threat.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Silver:** An elemental agent; specialist in all things technical. See page 15 for Silver's stats.
- **Rothwyn:** Mother of the family unit in the urban time capsule; responsible for the domestic side of the experiment. Has been trained to be sensitive and is even a little psychic. Very protective of her baby. Afraid to leave the capsule. Has no technical knowledge as their technology is all provided for them to use.
- **Eldred:** Father of the family unit in the urban time capsule. Very passive (possibly the norm for males from the 35th Century). As Rothwyn, afraid to leave the capsule and has no technical knowledge. "Eldred" and "Rothwyn" aren't their real names (and whoever assigned them as names suitable for the 20th Century got them wrong by almost a thousand years).

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The time capsules of the rural and provincial study groups could still be in 1980 at the end of the story (though it's more likely they were also retrieved when the urban group's capsule was recalled to the future). Although the capsules are invisible, they'll eventually be discovered, leading to other triggers for irregularities to break through in the 1980s.

- Is Time also present in this assignment? Has the time travel experiment allowed it or its agents to break through, remaining undetected by the elementals and remaining free when they depart?
- Time travel is such an obvious trigger for irregularities that it offers an easy concept for more adventures. How about time travellers from the past? A Victorian time traveller perhaps, a la H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*?

ROTHWYN

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Knowledge 3 (AoE: History)

TRAITS
Code of Conduct (Major) – Rigid rules regarding personal privacy
Devotion - Her baby
Empathic
Passionate Love – Her baby
Phobia – Agoraphobia
Psychic
Technically Inept

TECH LEVEL: 8
STORY POINTS: 6

ELDRED

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 3 (AoE: History)

TRAITS
Code of Conduct (Major) – Rigid rules regarding personal privacy
Cowardly
Eccentric (Minor) – Passive and reserved
Phobia – Agoraphobia
Technically Inept
Unadventurous (Minor)

TECH LEVEL: 8
STORY POINTS: 6

THE TIME CAPSULE

Armour: 5. **Hit Capacity:** 20. **Speed:** 0
Traits: Bulky (Major), Environmental (Minor: Hermetically Sealed), Forcefield (Major), Invisible (Special Bad), Transmit, Vortex, Restriction – Controlled remotely from the future
Story Points: 6

THE CHANGELING

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**1**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**5**

SKILLS
Fighting 1

TRAITS
Distinctive
Eccentric (Major) – Has a baby's intellect, emotions and understanding of the world
Natural Weapon (Major) – Ageing or De-ageing Touch: L(4/L/L) damage, ignores Armour and other protection
Weakness (Major) – If the Changeling's hands contact each other, it reverts to being a normal baby (which undoes all previous effects of its touch)

TECH LEVEL: N/A
STORY POINTS: 4

BIO-CONTROL UNIT

AWARENESS	**6**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Medicine 3, Science 4, Subterfuge 4, Survival 2, Technology 5

TRAITS
Alien Appearance
Cyborg
Networked (Major) – With the other capsules
Psychic
Psychic Assault – Contest of Presence + Resolve to inflict Resolve damage
Psychic Illusions (see page 40)
Size: Tiny (Minor)
Scan
Slow (Major) – Only until it grows itself a mobile form, then gains **Fast (Major)**
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Transmit
Vortex – As well as time travel, the time crystal allows the bio-unit to control time in other ways (such as accelerating the ageing of the baby and giving it its own powers over time)

TECH LEVEL: 8
STORY POINTS: 8

ASSIGNMENT IV

"It's been trapped. In every photograph that was ever taken. It can be any shape. It can be any shape it wants to be."

SYNOPSIS

A junk shop with apartments above, 1980

In a yard behind a junk shop dealing in lost property, three sepia-tinted children in Victorian clothing are playing. They enter the shop and head upstairs to a photographic laboratory and darkroom to look through a collection of old photos. Later, four more sepia children from one of the photos are also playing in the yard with the original three.

Sapphire appears and the children all vanish as they run away. She's joined by Steel, who has already entered the building and found nobody on the ground floor. Steel considers the shop selling old things to be a room full of active triggers, but Sapphire senses that the time break isn't here, though it's close by.

Searching the shop, Sapphire spots the eldest of the sepia children, a girl with a parasol. As Sapphire tries to find her, a rack of umbrellas comes to life like flapping crows and threatens her. First Steel and then Sapphire are pulled into old photos with figures in similar poses, becoming two-dimensional images, but are restored when the girl runs away.

Outside with the other children, the girl speaks to an unseen presence, apologising and asking it to come home.

Heading upstairs, Sapphire and Steel search the apartment of the shop's owner, a Mr H Williamson. They break into his photo lab and discover many old photographs, but no new ones despite the modern equipment. Sapphire realises that some of the photos are missing images of children.

Hearing music from another of the apartments, Sapphire and Steel meet Liz Owen who's getting herself ready to go to the club where she works at night. Liz tells them her flatmate is missing and that the old landlord also left several months ago. The new landlord

doesn't even ask her for rent and never opens the shop, but Liz can't describe him even though she's met him several times. She also tells the elementals that the building is haunted by the ghosts of children.

Outside, the children greet a figure in a suit. He enters the shop and takes off his bowler hat to reveal that he has no face, just an oval devoid of features.

Liz sees the man in the suit on the stairs. He now has a face, but it fades to a blank again when Liz goes back into her room.

Sapphire finds a photograph from ninety-seven years ago with two people who don't belong in it. As they take the photo to show Liz, Sapphire senses that something was on the stairs a few minutes ago, something that was alive but in a different sort of way, just paper, copper and chemicals in a man's shape that's almost two hundred years old. Unlike the sepia children, who were once human, the Shape was never human.

Steel reasons that the Shape got into our reality through a time break caused by the very first photograph. It's been trapped within photos ever since until Williamson's experiments with photographic techniques somehow freed it. Sapphire takes time on the stairs back so that they can see it. The man in the suit wearing the face he showed Liz briefly appears, then a series of negative figures flicker in and out. Sapphire senses it is in every photograph that ever was, and it can be any shape from any photograph it wants. But it prevents her materialising its real form. Looking for it in some of the old photos, they realise that it could be only half-seen or have its back to the camera or be behind something, in the next room or the next street. But it's always there somewhere, every photograph being a picture of infinity.

To stop them prying further, the Shape transforms Steel into an image in a photograph again. The sepia children appear and surround Sapphire but flee when she crushes the girl's parasol like paper. Steel is restored again.

The elementals encounter the Shape and realise that they are each seeing a different face. It becomes clear that it's psychic when it intrudes on their telepathic conversation. The Shape moves into one photo then another as it escapes from them. Steel wants to destroy all the photographs in the shop, but Sapphire realises they can't destroy every single photo in the world.

As Liz is about to leave for work, Sapphire and Steel show her the old photo with people who don't belong in it and point out the tiny, indistinct figures of the missing landlord and her friend Ruth Phillips. Sapphire and Liz go outside to find the children. When Liz hugs one, it crumples and breaks into pieces of card.

Steel produces an enlargement of Ruth's image so that Liz can clearly see it's her friend.

Sapphire makes contact with Ruth, who replies by reciting "*As I was going up the stair…*" from the poem *Antigonish*. The lines remind her of the man she saw on the stairs, her last memory. Ruth doesn't know where she is and can't really see anything. She says Williamson was working on a photograph in his darkroom when the man in the suit arrived. To prevent her saying more, the Shape burns the original photo, killing both Ruth and Williamson. When Sapphire tries to take time back to save them, the Shape resists, briefly transforming her into a two-dimensional cut-out photograph.

Searching the darkroom again, Steel finds that Williamson's experiments included combining elements from different photos from different times. But what freed the Shape was when he included a kaleidoscope in one of his slide-shows, the mirrored prism acting as a funnel to drag the Shape here. When Williamson dismantled the kaleidoscope's prisms, the Shape was released after more than a hundred and fifty years of imprisonment.

The Shape traps Sapphire and Steel in a framed photograph before they can act on their new knowledge. They manage to communicate telepathically and try to psychically call to Liz before she leaves. The Shape returns and begins to torture Sapphire and Steel with a cigarette lighter, until they draw on the powers of Mercury and Silver to turn the picture's glass into a mirror.

Liz returns and the Shape moves into the photograph. Sapphire urgently instructs Liz how to create a prism using their mirror and two other glass-fronted pictures, releasing the elementals but trapping the Shape in the endless reflections. Steel uses a toy kaleidoscope from the junk shop as a more permanent prison. The sepia children are all dragged back into their photos.

When they leave, Sapphire and Steel take the kaleidoscope with them to be placed aboard a ship that's about to sink in the Arctic Ocean west of the Bering Strait, where it will be trapped in a pyramid of ice for seventy-five years. When that time is up, they will be waiting to stop it again.

Before they depart, Steel warns Liz to destroy every photograph of herself and never have another one taken, as the Shape has sworn to have his revenge.

STORY DATING

Steel states that it's ninety-six years after 1884, making it 1980.

TRIGGERS

The Shape exists in every photograph ever taken, so any photo is a potential trigger. The oldest surviving photograph was taken in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. Titled *View from the Window at Le Gras*, it was taken on a pewter plate thinly coated with bitumen of Jude, a naturally occurring asphalt, and depicts a landscape of Saint-Loup-de-Varennes taken from a window of his house. Sapphire incorrectly states that this was the first ever photograph, but that had been taken in 1822, also by Niépce. However, it's the earliest *surviving* photograph and more significantly the first ever of a real-world scene, the earlier one being of an engraving.

But whether it was the now lost 1822 photograph or the surviving one from 1826, its creation provided a unique access point. It formed a time break for something that wanted to get in: an entity that became the Shape. Once it had entered our world within the first photograph, it could hop to the next photo to be created, then the next and so on as photography took off. But it was trapped inside photographs until Williamson accidentally freed it.

It's therefore the landlord's experiments with prisms which is the specific trigger for the Shape's release in 1980. The prisms of a toy kaleidoscope are also the means to trap it again.

IRREGULARITIES

The man without a face is merely called "Shape" in the show's credits. It appears as a faceless man in a suit and bowler hat, but we're told that it can take on any shape it wants to be. It can even make itself appear different to different people. We only see it use two human faces, but it can take them from every photograph ever created so it has billions to choose from. Presumably, it doesn't even need to look human.

Given that the Shape originally accessed our reality via a time break created by the first photograph, it's presumably one of Time's agent, one of the creatures that endlessly moves up and down the corridor of Time looking for weak points into our dimension.

The Shape is equated with the subject of the poem *Antigonish* by William Hughes Mearns, which we hear spoken by Liz's friend Ruth from within the photo she's trapped in. Ruth quotes a slightly altered but probably better known version of the first verse:

As I was going up the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there!
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish he'd stay away!

Mearns was known for writing nonsense verse such as this. But this poem was originally part of a play he wrote around 1899 after hearing reports of a ghost appearing on the stairs of a haunted house in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Like the ghost in the poem, the Shape often

appears on the stairs between the junk shop and the apartments on the floor above.

The Shape has drawn a group of sepia-tinted children from a Victorian photograph, and they in turn bring others to life. They're not ghosts, not images, but something in between. Sapphire says they were human once. From a distance, they appear real, though the sepia tones look odd. Even up close, they seem to be three-dimensional. It's only if they're touched

that their true nature becomes clear, that they're two-dimensional things of card or paper.

The Shape could use the subjects of any photo to create similar creatures. They aren't particularly dangerous but are used as spies or distractions, and are unsettling if nothing else. They have the ability to create more of their kind from photographs, but they can easily be destroyed by being crumpled up or burned. Living photos aren't necessarily human in form: the umbrellas that came to life in the junk shop were also taken from one of the old photos, of a pair of women struggling with their umbrellas on a windy day. When the Shape again becomes trapped in the kaleidoscope's prism, all the living photos are returned to their original pictures.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire and Steel are at their most remote in this story, neither of them displaying much of a connection with Liz. Steel's warning to her at the end, that she must destroy all photographs of herself and never have another taken, is imparted in such a blunt manner that it seems like an accusation that this was all her fault.

Steel again demonstrates his technical expertise, this time by setting up optical equipment and developing photos in Williamson's darkroom.

Both Sapphire and Steel are able to turn Liz's record player off remotely, gaining Control (Minor) for a scene by spending a Story Point with their Elemental Agent trait. Steel also does this to gain Open/Close and unbolt a door. Drawing on the powers of Mercury and Silver to create a mirror is acheived by similar means to gain Convert (Minor).

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

With this fourth assignment, we return to the spooky atmosphere of the first two stories. This isn't really a traditional ghost story though, but more a tale of the uncanny. True, the appearance and disappearance of the Victorian children initially give the impression of it being another ghost story, and their chanting of old rhymes like *Eeny Meeny Macka Racka*, *See-Saw Sacradown* and *Pease Porridge Hot* seems like deliberate misdirection intended to remind the viewer of the nursery rhymes in *Assignment I* which enabled the ghostly visual refractions to appear. Liz's tale of the shop being haunted would seem to confirm this. Similar misdirection could work on a group of Players.

The Shape itself doesn't really have the properties of a ghost but of some other entity from weird fiction. Nevertheless, *Assignment IV* has the feel of a ghost story and should have the same atmosphere.

The Shape is a menacing figure. It's one of the few entities from outside our reality that has the power of speech, or at least the power of intelligent speech. It's also a more tangible villain than the ghosts of the first two stories. Its control over photographs and ability to drag victims into them make it a very dangerous opponent. It could easily kill the elemental agents by doing so and immediately burning the photo. But it has a sadistic streak and enjoys toying with its prey. In the TV story, we get a demonstration of just how powerful and how cruel the Shape is when it burns the photograph in which the missing landlord and tenant are trapped. The GM should arrange for something similarly dramatic to happen in the game, to let the Players know exactly what they're dealing with.

The Shape's personality changes a little when it assumes different faces. With its younger face, it's a suave, mocking figure; with its older face, it's more obviously sadistic and cruel. Other faces would presumably reveal other facets of its personality, though none of them would be pleasant company!

Although the story takes place entirely within the junk shop and apartments plus immediate surroundings, it's clear the Shape isn't restricted from wandering further afield. In the first episode, the eldest sepia child is in contact with it, begging it to come home after the arrival of Sapphire and Steel. It's intriguing to wonder where the Shape had gone and what it was up to. After all, it can instantaneously go anywhere in the world where even a single photograph exists.

TRAPPED INSIDE A PHOTOGRAPH

Anyone trapped in a photograph by the Shape is powerless to move. Their perception of their surroundings and of the world beyond the photo is limited, reducing their Awareness by 3 points (to a minimum of 0). It feels like being half-asleep and daydreaming. They can only take actions or use traits which don't require physical movement, and even some of those aren't possible. Although Sapphire and Steel could still communicate telepathically, they were unable to teleport out of the photograph. Any action they *are* able to take has a -2 penalty to any rolls.

The Shape is the only thing to have free movement within a photograph. It can enter any photo and do whatever it pleases to anyone trapped there, while they remain immobile and helpless to resist.

If a photograph is burned or otherwise destroyed, anyone trapped within it is automatically killed no matter what normal protection they have. The Shape can escape this fate as it can shift to another photo in an instant: the destruction of a single photo won't harm it while others exist.

Escape from a photograph is possible though. Sapphire and Steel were able to alter the glass of a framed photo they were trapped in into a mirror, then instructed Liz to use two other mirrors to create a prism, the reflections pulling them free while trapping the Shape. Players may come up with other equally ingenious ideas.

The Shape's high Resolve and Indomitable trait also means that it can often resist Sapphire's attempts to reverse time, creating a sort of mental barrier. In one instance, this transformed Sapphire into a life-size cut-out photo (a Good result by the Shape) but only until it departed.

It's also worth noting that the Shape is telepathic and able to eavesdrop on the elemental agents' psychic conversations. Until it gives itself away, it may be able to learn all sorts of useful information as to their intentions.

As in *Assignment II*, the Shape is another threat that Sapphire and Steel realise they cannot defeat. It exists in every photograph and, unless they can destroy every photo that ever existed, it will survive. But unlike the Darkness, the Shape is not a foe they can come to some agreement with. They don't have anything to tempt it into a deal. In the end, they have to settle for trapping it for another seventy-five years, with the proviso that they'll have to be around when it escapes in order to trap it again.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Liz Owen:** A lonely young woman who works nights at a club under the name Liz Duprey. Her only friend has disappeared. Tries to be cheerful but has inner sadness.
- **Ruth Phillips:** Liz's friend. Trapped inside a photograph, she can't see anything clearly and cannot move. Doesn't understand what has happened to her.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- If Sapphire and Steel are trapped in the café for all eternity at the end of *Assignment VI*, who will be assigned to prevent the Shape's return in seventy-five years' time?

LIZ OWEN

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Craft (hostess) 3, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Attractive
Impoverished

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

- The Shape as a faceless man in a bowler hat invites comparisons with the works of surrealist artist René Magritte (though P.J. Hammond says that this was coincidental as he knew very little about Magritte at the time). Could this accidental similarity form another weakness in reality, allowing the Shape to escape into paintings and illustrations as well as photographs?
- Similarly, could there be something else lurking within movie film, as the Shape does in still photographs? The *Torchwood* story *From Out of the Rain* (also written by P.J. Hammond) features entities which can step out of films and could provide inspiration.

LIVING PHOTO

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Alien
Dependency (Major) – The Shape: Living Photos are forced back into their original photographs if the Shape is destroyed or becomes trapped again
Distinctive
Fear Factor 1
Special – Photographic Friends: Can create new Living Photos from images in old photographs, and can send any character into any photo (requiring a contest of Resolve + Convince) as per the Shape's ability; the latter effect only lasts for a number of Rounds equal to the Living Photo's Resolve
Weakness (Major) – The people brought to "life" from photos are only 2D constructs made of paper or card and can easily be destroyed

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 1-2

THE SHAPE

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 4, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 4, Technology 1

TRAITS
Alien, Alien Appearance
Alien Organs (Special) – Can only be killed if every photo ever is destroyed
Fear Factor 2
Immortal (Special)
Immunity – Immune to physical damage
Indomitable
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special) – Can take on the form of anything in any photograph
Special – In Every Photograph That Ever Was: The Shape has complete control over photographs and everything in them. It can move into and out of any photo, instantly jump between photos, and can send any character into any photo (requiring a contest of Resolve + Convince) and bring them back. Characters in photos are killed if the photo is destroyed. It can also bring other things out of photos, creating Living Photos.
Telepathy

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 8

ASSIGNMENT V

"So on June 21st, 1930 this planet faces extinction unless..."
"…on June 22nd, George McDee dies."

SYNOPSIS

Lord Mullrine's country house, 21st June 1980, and 21st to 22nd June 1930

21st June 1980: Lord Arthur Mullrine, his sister Emma and their butler Greville are preparing for a party at their country home. The party will recreate 21st June 1930 as today is the fiftieth anniversary of Mullrine International.

Mullrine uses an ultrasonic device to enter his office, which adjoins the drawing room. He instructs his secretary Anne Shaw that under no circumstances is she to use the padded green security door he came through, as her modern clothes would ruin the party's period effect. When he leaves, Anne notices that he's forgotten to take the ultrasonic device with him, so he can't get back into the office even if he wanted to as the door has no lock or handle on the outside. The office clock says 6.30pm.

The first guests arrive: Mullrine International's deputy chairman Felix Harborough and his wife Annabelle; and Felicity McDee, the widow of Mullrine's deceased business partner, and her grandson Howard. Howard points out the black mourning crepe over the portrait of his grandfather, Felicity's late husband Dr George McDee, which shouldn't be there as George would have still been alive on this date in 1930.

Howard switches on a vintage radio to hear the test match score, but it plays the commentary

of a match from exactly fifty years ago. Felix opens the back of the radio to find a tape recorder hidden inside.

The guests seem to be becoming confused about the date. Felicity briefly sees the padded green door to Mullrine's office replaced with a standard wooden one, as it would have been in 1930.

More guests arrive: Sapphire and Steel, posing as Miles and Virginia Cavendish. Mullrine seems to think that "Miles" is a chap he knows who deals in futures.

The radio now plays a live music programme from 1930, but Felix finds the tape recorder has vanished, replaced with genuine radio valves of the period. Howard comments on being able to see the church tower from the window even though it was bombed in the War. He also notices that the mourning crepe has vanished from his grandfather's portrait.

Upstairs, Sapphire says she hasn't touched anything here that wasn't made later than fifty years ago. They change into period clothes, and Steel dons a fake moustache. Sapphire hasn't yet detected the time break they're here to investigate. They go downstairs to join the party and meet everyone.

Sapphire senses that Howard and Annabelle are rather more than friends, something that Annabelle's husband Felix is jealously aware of. Meanwhile, Mullrine and Felix have been talking business. Felix has ambitions to replace Mullrine, but Mullrine refuses to retire.

Sapphire notices that the padded green office door is the only thing out of place for 1930, and senses a barrier across it like a blue light, perhaps evidence of a ley line, with something twisting and turning behind it. She projects her consciousness through the door. When she returns, Sapphire reports that there's a sense

of euphoria on the other side of it, as if something wonderful happened in there.

The final pair of guests arrive: Tony Purnell, the son of Mullrine International's merchant banker, and his girlfriend Veronica Blamey. It's already dark outside despite it being the summer solstice and a thick fog is rising. Tony tries to phone his father but the 1930s-style telephone doesn't have a dial and he can't get the operator to put him through. They also find the contents of their cases have changed to genuine period clothing and effects.

In the office, Anne Shaw is still working. The clock shows it's now only 6.31pm and the second-hand is going backwards. She finds that the ultrasonic device won't unlock the door to fetch Mullrine for an urgent business call.

Lord Mullrine says a toast to his old partner and friend George McDee. As he does, the fifty candles on the celebration cake blow out and then vanish completely, and George himself enters the room as though he's not been dead for half a century. Most of those present are nonplussed, but Felicity fusses over him until he tells her she's fifty years too old to be his wife. George calls his grandson Malcolm, the name of Howard's late father. Howard objects, but some of the others also start to call him Malcolm after this. George departs into the office (his laboratory in 1930) thinking this is all a prank, the 1930s door changing back into the green security door behind him.

Something is preventing Sapphire from analysing everyone, so she doesn't yet know who their enemy, "It", is using.

Howard slips away to search Tony's room but returns in time to join the others in a game of sardines. Veronica is the first to hide. Taking advantage of the game, Sapphire and Steel search the library and notice many scientific books on the shelves.

Looking for Veronica, Annabelle opens a cupboard door in the hall and her dead body topples out, a carving knife embedded in her back. Attempts to contact the police are fruitless as the telephone is dead, the front door won't open and the windows prove to be unbreakable. "It" has completely isolated the house.

Upstairs, an unseen presence confronts Tony and he collapses in terror. Later, Howard finds Tony's room in disarray and Tony is missing.

Sapphire and Steel discuss the house being on a ley line, making it perfect for turning the clock back. Sapphire tries a psychic reading of Tony Purnell's glass and finds that he came to the house recently to visit Mullrine's secretary Anne. Anne was jealous of Veronica, but Tony

told her that he can easily get rid of her. Sapphire is interrupted when she hears a gunshot from the near future.

Those gathered in the hall are having problems with their memories. Steel tells them it's a symptom of time being tampered with.

When the sheet covering Veronica is removed, her body has vanished. Steel takes the lead in questioning the assembled party. Mullrine talks about George McDee's research into finding a cure for all diseases. Sapphire uses her powers to see McDee at work. He was manipulating the genetic code of a virus and would have succeeded if he had one more day. Except that if he had lived one more day, he would have accidentally smashed a petri dish, releasing a culture that would wipe out all life. If George McDee doesn't die on 22nd June 1930, mankind is doomed! McDee hasn't reappeared since he went into the office earlier, so Sapphire takes time back so that Steel can speak with him. He accuses the scientist of taking huge risks, but McDee angrily replies that there is no danger.

Greville finds Tony hiding in the dining room. He insists on speaking only with "Miles". But as Greville is fetching Steel, a gunshot is heard. Tony is found dead, shot through the heart.

Sapphire tells Steel that the motives for the murders are irrelevant. He replies that "It" is setting puzzles that they're innately bound to resolve. "It" is having to deal with them on more than one level, both as Miles and Virginia, and as Sapphire and Steel. As the elementals watch, the dining table and Tony's body become covered in dust and cobwebs, ageing forward in time by fifty years. Only the revolver that killed Tony is untouched, as Sapphire says it's in a different time frame and is going to be used again.

Howard reports that, apart from Greville, all the servants have disappeared. Steel produces the revolver. It's confirmed to be Howard's and was originally his grandfather's. Felix accuses Howard of blackmailing Tony for embezzling his father's bank, which may be a motive for Howard to murder him, particularly as Tony confessed to his father a few days ago.

In the dining room, Tony's body is found to have vanished and the table is clean again. Other than Sapphire and Steel, the ensemble seem to dismiss the deaths and return to their normal conversations.

Sapphire scans both murder weapons and determines that no living soul used them on Veronica or Tony. She becomes possessed and tries to stab herself with the knife, but is stopped by Steel. She then aims the revolver at Steel, but he's already removed the bullets.

When Sapphire recovers, she says that "It" needs to retrace the years back to 1930 until time takes a different course, one in which George McDee accidentally wipes out the human race.

Felix expresses his suspicions about “Miles” and “Virginia”, as nobody here knows much about them. But when the elementals return to the group, Steel tells them he’s a qualified investigator.

Dinner commences in the dining room at last, though Emma slips away. She heads to the office, now as George’s laboratory in 1930, the door changing back to the green security door behind her. Emma meets George there, and it’s clear that they’re having an affair. In the 1980 version of the room, it’s still only 6.36pm. Anne Shaw’s computer goes wild, spontaneously printing out a news item from 1930 about George McDee’s death in a fire. Initially, the report states that the fire was in his laboratory, but it then changes to the library.

At the conclusion of dinner, Howard takes a sip of port while making a caustic speech and promptly collapses, poisoned by cyanide. His body vanishes shortly afterwards and most of those present seem to have forgotten about his death already. Annabelle and Felix are the exceptions as they weren’t born in 1930 and are therefore themselves at risk. But Felix also soon forgets, and Annabelle is electrocuted by the drawing room door handle as she angrily tries to leave.

Sapphire and Steel reassure Felix that nobody has really died. Time has simply been suspended as all those who weren’t born in 1930 are being removed from the equation. They tell him who they really are, and Sapphire demonstrates her powers to convince him.

Felix wants to help them and to have a code name like theirs. Sapphire suggests Brass and also grants him the power of telepathy (but only “the first level”). Getting to work, he finds Greville investigating some electrical wires he says he found connecting the fuse box to the electrified door handle.

Sapphire sends Steel forward to 1980 to check Mullrine’s office for reports of George McDee’s death in 1930. Steel uses the vintage radio to generate the correct ultrasonic frequency to open the green security door and get in. The office clock now shows 6.40pm. Anne is still working and stops him using the computer, so he discreetly pockets Mullrine’s ultrasonic device and goes to get Sapphire’s help. Back in 1930, he notices that time has been going backwards: it’s now a quarter past eleven whereas it was twenty-five to midnight before he left, and Felix says he was away for two hours.

Sapphire and Steel re-enter the office in 1980 at 6.42pm. While Sapphire distracts Anne, Steel psychically operates the computer to get the information about McDee’s death. The news report from 1930 now says that the fire completely destroyed the library rather than the laboratory, an attempt at misdirection by “It”.

Back in 1930, Felix starts asking Mullrine about George McDee’s scientific work. Now believing that Felix is from the bank, Mullrine shows him into the laboratory where George is currently working. Felix picks up a petri dish of cultures which, in a fit of anger, George accidentally knocks into his face. Felix runs off to find

Sapphire and Steel in the library, but collapses dead, his face ravaged by the virus. The clock strikes midnight: it is 22nd June 1930, the day on which George McDee must die! Felix's body vanishes and the stage is now fully set.

Sapphire and Steel are now invisible to the remaining characters and are observers to the events of this night. They realise that George McDee didn't just die but was murdered, and that they must make sure it happens.

Greville's father is working with Mullrine on the company finances while his two-year old son is asleep in his cot in the servant's quarters. Emma slips down in her nightclothes to see George in the laboratory, but he's trying to work. In order to get her to go, he angrily tells her he doesn't love her.

When Mullrine spots Emma leaving the laboratory, he becomes enraged as his sister could put his newly signed business agreement with George at risk. If George left Felicity for her, the scandal would be ruinous. Emma stalks off and goes to talk to Felicity, telling her about her affair with George.

Upset, Felicity takes her husband's revolver and goes down to confront him. George admits that Emma is his lover, but Felicity can't bring herself to shoot him. Sapphire and Steel believe that time is now on its new track with George McDee surviving. Sapphire takes time back a minute or so to see Felicity kill her husband in the original timeline, but they realise that what they have already seen is what originally happened: this was not the moment of George McDee's death.

Believing he's been manipulated by the Mullrines, McDee tries to call off the business deal. But it's too late, the agreement has already been signed and Mullrine won't cancel it. A struggle ensues and Mullrine almost stabs McDee with a letter opener until Greville's father walks in. This was also not the moment of George McDee's death.

George returns to the laboratory where Emma confronts him again. Felicity enters and sees the pair embracing. Emma reaches for the revolver on the desk and shoots Felicity.

Sapphire and Steel talk to Emma as they realise she should have shot George, albeit by accident. Emma tells them she has been promised a lifetime of happiness with George. If she doesn't shoot George this time around, they'll both be young again. But it's a trick. Steel explains about the mutant, persistent viruses George has created escaping the laboratory and killing everything on Earth. George himself is already infected.

George persuades Emma that he must die in order to save humanity. Emma is convinced by him and Sapphire takes time back again. The elementals watch as Emma shoots George as he comes to Felicity's aid, as she always should have. George knocks over a Bunsen burner as

THE GAZ

Monday, 23rd June, 1930

MAJOR FIRE AT COUNTI

The residence occupied by well-known businessman Mr Arthur Mullrine and formerly known as Apsley House was last night the scene of a two-alarm fire that seriously destroyed part of the West Wing. It also resulted in the tragic death of one of the occupants. Chief Officer Higgins who supervised the fire-fighting activities told our reporter that it was one of the worst fires he had attended in the district in recent years. The deceased, whose body was found in the ashes, was believed to be the celebrated physicist Dr George McDee, whom readers will recall caused such a stir last month with his paper to the Kopoloski Society on coherent light and the microscope. Interviewed by our reporter, a desolate Arthur Mullrine praised the local brigade for their prompt response. But in spite of their gallant efforts, the laboratory where Doctor McDee was known to work late into the night was totally destroyed.

he falls, starting a fire that destroys the laboratory and all the virus cultures in it.

Sapphire takes time forward to 1980, where Lord Mullrine's party is yet to start. The first guests arrive: Felix and Annabelle, and Felicity and Howard. Time is back on track with none of the humans remembering anything out of the ordinary. Sapphire and Steel depart unnoticed.

STORY DATING

Sapphire confirms that the two time periods are in 1930 and 1980, exactly fifty years apart. Emma Mullrine states the date as being June 21st; it's also shown on a calendar in Mullrine's office (in 1980). George McDee's death is stated as occurring on June 22nd, 1930.

TRIGGERS

The trigger for this assignment is formed by the conjunction of three things:

Firstly, Lord Mullrine's house and its contents so accurately replicate those of 21st June 1930 that it allows Time to break through. This includes furniture and furnishings, wallpaper and other décor, and the clothes that everyone has to wear at the party. Even the materials everything is made of are authentic: Sapphire detects nothing that was made later than 1930. There are two exceptions: the office with its green security door, and the tape player hidden in the radio that plays a recording of a cricket test commentary from 1930. Both of these vanish in the 1930 time period, replaced by their contemporary equivalents.

Secondly, Emma's love for Dr McDee provides Time with a willing agent.

And thirdly, the virus and the accident that releases it create a branch in history that Time is able to exploit.

Sapphire and Steel also discuss the presence of ley lines running through the house and it being the summer solstice as both contributing

to time being conducive to interference.

IRREGULARITIES

Referred to only as "It" throughout the story, Time (see page 16) is again the main threat in this assignment. But again, it doesn't make a direct appearance, other than very briefly as a shadow falling across the doorway of Tony's room and terrifying him. In fact, it's even less of a presence than it was in *Assignment I*, when it was represented by a blinding light. This time, we pretty much only see its effects: taking time back fifty years, killing the murder victims and making their bodies vanish shortly after being discovered, sealing the house off from the outside world, and providing Emma with a second attempt at murdering Felicity McDee.

In fact, there are not even any of Time's fragments/scions or visual refractions this time around. It has a single agent in the form of Emma Mullrine, and she's only human. Time hasn't given her any superhuman powers. Having been promised a second opportunity to kill Felicity, Emma believes that she is being offered a second chance at life, changing history so that she can spend it with George McDee. Even when told about the virus and what will actually happen if she doesn't kill him, it takes McDee himself to persuade her that he must die. He doesn't want to be the man who wiped everyone out, with Emma and he being the virus's first victims.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

The plot resembling that of a murder mystery is more than just a knowing nod to the audience but actively becomes part of the story itself. Steel seems particularly affected by the genre. Usually taciturn, he is in this story remarkably verbose, even addressing the suspects in the manner of Poirot at one point. This seems to be deliberate rather than the result of the new writers misinterpreting his usual character, with David McCallum adopting different mannerisms as Steel becomes the epitome of a fictional detective of the 1930s. Perhaps even the elementals are falling under Time's spell to make everyone play a role in keeping with the genre and period. Including this in the game provides Players with the opportunity to stretch their acting skills.

Sapphire's ability to roll time backwards and forwards now extends to fifty years, which is far greater than she has previously been able to achieve. This has more to do with "It" having already linked 1930 and 1980 than with her powers having increased.

Sapphire is also able to grant basic telepathic powers to Felix, by spending Story Points at least equal to the cost of Felix having purchased them. He presumably wouldn't retain them after Sapphire has departed.

Steel gains Weld to repair the broken knife blade. He is later seen operating Anne Shaw's office computer without touching it, again by spending a Story Point with his Elemental Agent trait, gaining Control (Minor) for a scene. He also demonstrates his technical knowledge again by adjusting an old-fashioned radio to

produce ultrasonic frequencies.

Steel shows uncharacteristic concern for a human when he says he wants to keep Felix's mind off of the possibility of his impending death. A similar thing occurred in *Assignment III* and will again in *Assignment VI*.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is the only TV story that wasn't written by the series' creator, P.J. Hammond. Instead, it was co-written by two experienced screenwriters who had each separately written for *Doctor Who*: Don Houghton (writer of *Inferno* and *The Mind of Evil*) and Anthony Read (uncredited script editor for *Image of the Fendahl*, credited script editor from *The Sun Makers* to *The Armageddon Factor*, co-writer of *The Invasion of Time* under the pseudonym David Agnew, and writer of *The Horns of Nimon*). This might explain the difference in the style of this story, or it might just be down to it being modelled on a period murder mystery of the type that Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot might investigate.

The murder mystery format is a fun change, but it does away with much of the ghost story atmosphere. Instead, we have intrigue and arch humour, this being as much a parody as a pastiche. There are nods to a number of novels by Agatha Christie, some more obvious than others, including *They Do It With Mirrors, And Then There Were None* and *The Body in the Library*. The story even includes red herrings hinting that the butler did it! However, there is also an element of fantasy throughout, as the bodies keep vanishing and time is playing tricks. So it's clear that there's something out of the ordinary going on, even if the presence of Sapphire and Steel isn't enough of a clue.

The killings are impossible to solve if the story is approached as a standard murder mystery. None of the human suspects is the murderer, not even Emma Mullrine. It's only from the perspective of the elementals that any sense can be made of the deaths, as only they might realise that the killer isn't human. The murderer is Time itself, eliminating all those who weren't alive in 1930 so that it can recreate the exact circumstances of fifty years ago. Time starts with the youngest and works upwards in order, changing the method each time: Veronica (stabbed), Tony (shot), Howard (poisoned), Annabelle (electrocuted). Felix is next in line and is killed by the virus. Time spares Greville, who was two years old in 1930. Instead, he becomes his father who was in service to the Mullrines at the time.

LORD ARTHUR MULLRINE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 2, Marksman 3, Science 4, Technology 3

TRAITS
Authority (Minor) – Member of the House of Lords
Dark Secret (Minor) – Knows the secret of the death of George McDee
Distinctive
Obsession (Major) - Business
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5 (4 in 1930)
STORY POINTS: 6

EMMA MULLRINE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major) – The killer of George McDee
Selfish
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5 (4 in 1930)
STORY POINTS: 6

DR GEORGE MCDEE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 2, Medicine 4, Science 5, Technology 3

TRAITS
Argumentative
Bio Chemical Genius
Brave
Fame (Minor)
Obsession (Major) – His scientific research
Wealthy (Minor)

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

As an aside, it's interesting to speculate whether another series of murders is taking place below stairs, explaining why the servants (other than Greville) disappear by episode 4. The GM could expand on this angle to add further mystery and complexity.

There are plenty of signals that the GM can include to indicate there's something wrong with time even before the appearance of George McDee: the church spire being visible from the drawing room window even though it hasn't been there since the Second World War; the radio gaining genuine period components and broadcasting live music from 1930; night falling in early evening even though it's the summer solstice; etc. There are also the memory lapses, which even seem to affect Steel at one point as he quickly forgets Sapphire telling him that a gunshot is about to be heard. Only Sapphire remains unaffected.

After they arrive at the house, Sapphire and Steel change into authentic 1930s clothing, and Steel even sports a natty, if fake, moustache! Their assumed names of the Honourable Miles and Virginia Cavendish were chosen by them, rather than imposed on them by the authority they report to, and we can therefore assume the same about their attire. Steel's choice of a black dinner suit and bowtie is appropriate though typically unimaginative, while Sapphire's dress is suitably elegant but, unusually for her, also black. Describing

THE APOCALYPTIC VIRUS

The virus spreads by contagion, so direct contact with it or somebody already infected by it is required. But once a person is infected, it works very fast, often leading to death within a matter of minutes.

Anyone coming into contact with the virus must immediately make a Difficulty 21 Resolve + Strength roll to avoid becoming infected. A simple Failure means that they immediately take 1 point of damage (not prevented by Armour or similar) and must succeed at another roll every minute thereafter or take another point of damage; a Bad result means they automatically take 1 point of damage immediately and every minute thereafter; and a Disastrous result means they automatically take 1 point of damage immediately and every Round thereafter. The visible effects are the corruption of flesh as the virus rapidly spreads throughout the body.

Elementals are assumed to be immune to the effects of the virus, but it is otherwise lethal to all living organisms.

touches such as these to the Players helps give a better visual sense of proceedings.

Assignment V has the largest guest cast of any of the TV stories by some margin. Not counting a couple of extras and Valentine Dyall as the voice of the cricket commentator on the radio, there are eleven Non-Player Characters for the GM to manage. One of these, the secretary Anne Shaw, is confined to Lord Mullrine's office and has little involvement with the main plot. But the GM will need to keep track of the remaining ten and work hard to make them distinctive so that the Players remember who's who.

Several sub-plots were added to the script as red herrings and to help maintain the narrative

FELICITY MCDEE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Knowledge 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Minor) – Knows the secret of the death of her husband
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5 (4 in 1930)
STORY POINTS: 6

for six episodes, contributing to the complexity of the story, which is already complicated because of all the timey-wimey developments plus the murders themselves - as attested by the length of the synopsis for this story! We have: Felix's ambitions to replace Mullrine as head of the company; the affair between Annabelle and Howard; another between Tony and Anne (which may merely be a cover to allow Tony access to Mullrine's financial records); another between Emma and George (though this turns out to be pivotal to the main plot); Tony syphoning money from his father's bank and Howard blackmailing him over it; the friction between Mullrine and George over the founding of Mullrine International; and, briefly, Felix becoming "Brass" (something that Steel agrees to in order to keep Felix out of the way and his mind off his own impending

FELIX HARBOROUGH

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Knowledge 3, Science 2, Technology 3

TRAITS
Charming
Wealthy (Major)

As Brass, Felix gains **Psychic** and **Telepathy**.

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

ANNABELLE HARBOROUGH

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Craft (Piano) 3, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Attractive
Dark Secret (Minor) – Affair with Howard McDee
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

death). Sub-plots are standard fare in crime fiction, acting as red herrings to solving the mystery. They can make for interesting diversions but shouldn't be used to lead the Players too far down blind alleys.

The resolution of this story relies on a single event that happened on 22nd June 1930: the death of Dr George McDee. More specifically, the attempted murder of George's wife Felicity by Emma Mullrine that resulted in his death by shooting. The GM will need to ensure that events move towards this end, but this might make an adventure based on this story feel as if the Players are being pushed down a single track or be reduced to the role of observers, as Sapphire and Steel largely are in the final episode. In fact, any death of Dr McDee before the virus is released could possibly foil Time's attempt to destroy all life on Earth. Players of the *DWRPG* normally try to keep NPCs alive rather than ensure their death. But in *Sapphire & Steel*, that's not a given, particularly after the denouement of *Assignment II*. So once again, they will probably be put in a position where they need, if not to kill Dr McDee themselves, to ensure that he dies.

Dr McDee being alive when he should be dead for the past fifty years will probably clue the Players into him being central to what's happening. But they also need to become aware of the existence of the virus and the threat it poses. If they merely ensure McDee's death and depart without destroying the virus, the risk of it being accidentally released by somebody else remains, as does the time break

HOWARD MCDEE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 3, Knowledge 3, Marksman 3, Science 1, Technology 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Minor) – Affair with Annabelle Harborough
Dark Secret (Major) – Blackmailing Tony Purnell
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

GREVILLE

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Fighting 1, Subterfuge 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd
Reliable
Well Mannered

TECH LEVEL: 5 (4 as Greville Senior in 1930)
STORY POINTS: 4

the elementals were assigned to deal with.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Lord Arthur Mullrine**: Mr Mullrine in 1930; Lord Mullrine in 1980. Chairman of Mullrine International. 77 in 1980 and only 4' 11" tall. Diminutive in stature but big on personality. A business genius. Determined that the party should be as authentic to 1930 as possible.
- **Emma Mullrine**: Younger sister of Lord Mullrine. 74 in 1980. A lonely and selfish old woman. Was in love with George McDee in 1930, but shot him accidentally when she attempted to murder his wife Felicity.
- **Felix Harborough**: Husband of Annabelle; deputy chairman of Mullrine International. In his late 40s in 1980. Likeable but often fatuous. Hopes to become chairman when Mullrine steps down. Is granted the power of telepathy by Sapphire when he becomes "Brass".
- **Annabelle Harborough**: Wife of Felix, younger than him by about ten years. Bored with her husband and having an affair with Howard McDee.
- **Dr George McDee**: Brilliant but short-tempered scientist and Mullrine's business partner; (late) husband of

TONY PURNELL

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Knowledge 2, Technology 1, Transport 3

TRAITS
Arrogant
Dark Secret (Minor) – Affair with Anne Shaw
Dark Secret (Major) – Defrauding his father's business (until recently)
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

VERONICA BLAMEY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1

TRAITS
Devoted – Tony Purnell
Well Mannered

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Felicity. Scottish. Died on 22nd June 1930.

- **Felicity McDee**: Widow of George and grandmother of Howard. Has been harbouring bitterness and the secret of her husband's death for fifty years.
- **Howard McDee**: Grandson of Felicity and George. Very attentive to Annabelle Harborough; the two are rather more than friends. Blackmailing Tony Purnell over his embezzling.
- **Anthony (Tony) Purnell**: 25 in 1980. Son of Mullrine International's merchant banker; Virginia's boyfriend (but doesn't love her). Born in Maidenhead to a wealthy family. Enjoys fast cars, expensive clothes, money and women. Having an affair with Anne Shaw, but perhaps only to gain access to Mullrine's business records. Until recently, embezzling funds from his father's business; has been blackmailed by Howard over it.
- **Virginia Blamey**: Girlfriend of Tony Purnell. 24 in 1980. Very much in love with Tony. Not very bright. Born in Barnes.
- **Greville**: Mullrine's butler. 52 in 1980. Totally repressed personality. Devoted to Lord Mullrine. In 1930, his father was also in service to the Mullrines.
- **Anne Shaw**: Mullrine's secretary. Friendly and efficient. Having a discreet affair with Tony Purnell.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Felix Harborough suggests to Sapphire and Steel that he could be a fellow agent, and Sapphire gives him the code name Brass. Although Felix dies (or more accurately, he doesn't die but neither does he remember the events of this story), others who have encountered the elemental agents might have a similar idea, leading to the formation of a human organisation set up to combat Time, with its agents having similar code names.
- What if Time had succeeded and humanity was wiped out by the virus? How could the exploits of Sapphire and Steel continue in those circumstances? Bearing in mind that time travel is an anathema to the authority, would (could?) it resort to sending elemental agents back to try to rectify such a catastrophic disruption of the timeline? How would Time respond to this?
- This story provides an example of how the elemental agents can experience other times without being able to travel in time themselves. Having Time dump Sapphire and Steel in Victorian London or somewhere even further back as part of another scheme would be an attractive proposition. (As noted in the chapter on *Assignment I*, their mission involving the *Mary Celeste* may be another example of this given that 1872 is so far outside the "present" that Sapphire and Steel are usually assigned to.)

ANNE SHAW

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Technology 2

TRAITS
Attractive
Dark Secret (Minor) – Affair with Tony Purnell
Reliable

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

ASSIGNMENT VI

"This place is a trap for us. Look, transient beings have been sent to hunt us. Can you deal with them?"
"You know very well I can't!"

SYNOPSIS

Long Tor service station, mid-July 1981; a copy of the service station's café "nowhere and forever"

Sapphire and Steel arrive at a service station with a café and garage. Silver appears and tells them there are two other people here. They arrived in a car that was manufactured in 1946 and is no more than two years old. The couple are in the café but Silver hasn't questioned them. He was sent here to watch and wait, but he thinks the time break occurred sometime before the couple arrived. Curiously, he didn't hear the car approach. Sapphire uses her powers to show the arrival to Steel, the car pulling up and the couple getting out and looking perplexed.

Silver is sure that there's no time here; this place is a kind of pocket or vacuum. Traffic is audible but the sounds are repeated, just a second or so of looped sound of the traffic that was passing when the time break occurred. Silver confirms it's been 8.54pm ever since he arrived six hours ago, whereas it should now be three minutes after midnight. The clock in the service station is showing 8.54pm but is ticking the same second backwards and forwards. Steel switches a radio on, but it just keeps repeating the same second's broadcast, as does the speaking clock on the telephone.

In the café, the man and the woman have realised that they're in the future. They say they're just waiting in the hope they'll just go back without warning, the same as how they got here. The man explains that they'd intended to stop at an old garage he knows. But when they drove in, it suddenly became this place. Then Silver arrived. It was almost midnight on 25th July 1948. Sapphire realises that the couple are married, but not to each other.

Searching the garage office, Steel briefly sees a vision of an old man getting a tyre down from a pile. But he quickly fades away again.

Silver offers to make some food for the couple but they say they aren't hungry. They don't trust anything here. On further questioning, the man brusquely produces his ration book to satisfy Silver's curiosity. The woman points out there are plates of food on some of the tables and coats over the backs of chairs, but no sign of any other people.

Steel investigates the man's car, a Triumph luxury model. On the back seat, he finds a paper dated July 25th, 1948. Sapphire and Silver join him. Steel comments that all the building's lights are on even though the time break took place on a bright summer's day. Silver confirms that he didn't switch them on. Steel also tells them about the old man just before he appears and fades away again. Sapphire detects a sense of fear or violence, perhaps a side effect of the time break picking up powerful emotions from the past.

The man from 1948 claims that the old man in the garage they were stopping at always left all his lights on all day and night. He gets angry when Steel accuses the couple of running away from something. Suddenly a time break occurs and the time on the clock slips forwards by ten minutes to 9.04pm, with the second-hand now ticking two seconds forward and back.

To separate the couple, Silver goes to examine the car, with Sapphire and the man following. The man says they're both running away from their spouses. He locks the car to stop Silver prying. Sapphire and Silver tell him that if he tried to leave, he would just end up back here.

Inside, the woman refuses to tell Steel their names and insists they've done nothing wrong. As the man heads back inside, there's the sound of a tambourine, and the couple both become shadowy outlines before solidifying again.

While Sapphire is alone with Steel in the garage office, she expresses her suspicions about Silver and why he's here. She's concerned that they can't find any signs of serious damage yet and that there's nothing for them to wait for. Perhaps something is waiting for them.

The old man appears in the yard, no longer an image. He's frightened as he can't see the three elementals very clearly as though they're ghosts. He claims it's 1925, then fades away.

Silver believes that everything here is *too* haphazard, as though it's been designed. He says he didn't have a proper briefing, just a kind of knowledge that he should be here. Sapphire and Steel confirm they had the same. Sapphire adds that Specialists never move in

until Operators and Investigators have done their work, so why the delay of six hours between Silver's arrival and theirs?

There's another time break, this time of twenty minutes, to 9.24pm, and another tambourine jingle. It's now raining outside and Sapphire hears somebody approaching. They all peer out of the windows, but nobody sees anything even though the sound of footsteps passes right in front of them. Steel ventures out, telling Sapphire to lock the door behind him. A phone rings in the garage office, but when Sapphire answers it, it's just the speaking clock still stuck in a loop. Outside, the rain has stopped even though time hasn't moved on.

In the service station shop, a shadow-figure appears in front of Sapphire, materialising to become a man wearing a jacket with ragdolls sewn onto it and a battered top hat, and with rouged cheeks and nose, and a tambourine hanging from his belt.

Steel returns and questions the new arrival. He reluctantly gives his name as Johnny Jack and says he's a travelling performer. He was dropped off nearby by the rest of the company and believes it's 15th July 1957.

Silver secretly creates a copy of Johnny Jack's tambourine. Sapphire has already scanned the original and found no sinister elements, but Silver is looking for different things.

In the yard, Sapphire again sees the phantom of the old man, then uses her powers to try to see more. She sees a vision of sinister, grey-suited versions of the old man, Johnny Jack and the man from 1948.

Johnny Jack claims he's the only real musician amongst his troupe, but he won't play anything until the others are here. Silver concludes his examination of the tambourine and is concerned that it has never been played. It has only ever produced noise, not music.

At Steel's request, Sapphire creates an image of the man from 1948's car and Silver drives the real one into the garage and out of sight for Steel to examine. Silver then goes to check out the invisible barrier surrounding this place.

The woman says she wants to talk to Steel, to tell him the truth about the man. Steel asks Sapphire to speak to her, but the woman refuses to talk to her. Sapphire tries to scan her, but she instead sees a vision of shadow-outlines of herself and Steel still in this place and believes it's their own future destruction.

Silver reaches the barrier and taps at it with a tool from his kit, receiving a mild shock back. In the café, the man and Johnny Jack are somehow alerted, as is the old man in the garage yard. Their eyes briefly glow blue as all three transform into the sinister, besuited versions from Sapphire's earlier vision.

Inside, Sapphire senses what has happened and tells Steel that the three beings are almost the same as them, except they answer to a higher authority.

Sapphire and Steel go to talk to the woman. She says the man has been sent here from

1948 to kill all three elementals. Silver returns and says he can't break through the barrier; they can't escape. Silver believes the three are transient beings, the only creatures with similar powers. They can change shape and move anywhere, but only in the past. They can't move forward in time, unless they've been taught and given a device to get here.

Sapphire is suspicious as to why the woman is helping them now. Outside, the transient beings are listening in telepathically. Inside, the woman's voice takes on an electronic edge. Silver tears open her blouse to find a pair of electronic implants in her upper chest. When Silver removes them, she collapses.

The man from 1948 has realised that the car outside is just an illusion. Crashing through the door, he proves to be too strong for Steel to stop. He breaks down the garage door and finds the car with the boot open and the luggage having been searched through.

The elementals escape with the woman. She comes round and tells Steel about a wooden box that the man has that allows him to travel through time.

In the garage, the man admits to Johnny Jack that he has lost the box. Silver sneaks in and spots it under the car, but is discovered retrieving it and hands it to the transient beings. They threaten to send him back a couple of hundred million years to the Triassic Period. But as the man starts to open the box, another time break occurs, forty seconds this time, allowing Silver to get away.

Silver was able to make a reproduction of the box. Now, each time there's a time break, it will quadruple the time of the previous one. He says it's time's way of trying to counteract being tampered with. Sapphire looks into the replica and sees only space and thousands of years.

Silver insists that they escape. But Steel is determined that they must help the woman: it's their duty. They push past the old man in the yard, but he transforms into his transient being form. He offers to let Silver go if he hands over the replica time device. Instead, Silver uses it to send him into the past. Johnny Jack arrives and they send him back as well.

Meanwhile, Sapphire has been trying to get to the barrier with the woman. But when she reaches it, the man is waiting. Sapphire sends Steel a psychic summons, and he and Silver join them. The man has his box, which he aims at them and opens.

The woman is back in the café and now dressed all in black. She is joined by the man and they kiss. Sapphire and Steel enter. They are confused about what year it is. The man tells them it's 1948; they're in the wrong time.

Steel still has the replica time travel device. He threatens the man with it and gets him to put the original box on the table. The

man opens it, but there's only a travel chess set inside. The woman tells them that this place is the trap: it's nowhere and forever. She and the man both fade away. Steel tries to use the replica box, but it's also just a chess set now.

This is the future that Sapphire saw. Outside the café's window is nothing but endless stars.

STORY DATING

Sapphire says it's mid-July; Steel says that it's the 1980s. The service station's wall calendar is for 1981.

TRIGGERS

The situation with this assignment is a little different from the norm, and there isn't really a trigger as such. The time break has been deliberately created as a trap for Sapphire and Steel.

IRREGULARITIES

Transient beings (see page 18) are the threat in this story. They're described as being like elementals. In fact, Sapphire and Steel say the transient beings are almost the same as them. Although transient beings are believed to be locked in the past, these have been given a time travel device so that they can hunt Sapphire and Steel in the present.

There are parallels between the man, the woman and Johnny Jack and Steel, Sapphire and Silver respectively that reinforce the statement that they are the same. The man is taciturn and often brusque, like Steel, and is revealed to have superhuman strength. The woman, though playing a role for the majority of the story, is quicker to realise what's happening than the man, as Sapphire is quicker to work things out than Steel. When her real personality is finally revealed, she is cool and elegant like Sapphire, and is at least the man's equal in status. Johnny Jack is a more laid back character and a disruptive one, his leering at Sapphire (with his catch-phrase of "Got a kiss for Johnny Jack and all the children on his back?") being a caricature of Silver's flirting with her. He also arrives later than the man and the woman, as Specialists like Silver are supposed to do in relation to Operators like Sapphire and Steel.

The transient beings' time travel device is a small, flat wooden box like one for a travel chess set. Anyone opening it and staring in will see the past and the future, an experience similar to how gazing into a crystal ball is often imagined to be. The operator can use it to travel in time, or the box can be directed at somebody else like a weapon to send them into the past or future. Its stats are on page 83.

The transient beings answer to a higher authority which also tried to recruit both Sapphire and Steel. We aren't told anything further about this higher authority so we can only speculate. Possibly it wants revenge for

what Steel did in *Assignment II*, his sacrifice of Tully disrupting future history. It's also possible that it's Time once again, which has begun recruiting from the ranks of the elementals and those with similar powers to set up its own organisation. A third possibility is that it's a rival power to the elementals' own authority that is seeking to rein Sapphire and Steel in: Sapphire and Steel believe that it resents their achievements and independence.

The status of the woman from 1948 is unclear for most of the story. Silver discovers a pair of implants in her upper chest, through which the man seemingly controls her speech and actions. Once these are removed, she collapses but then speaks more freely. Steel believes that she really is from 1948 and has been brought here by the man. But at the end, she betrays Sapphire and Steel and joins the man, the last remaining transient being, seemingly of her own free will. The final scene could even be interpreted that she is revealed as their true leader.

S SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire and Silver again have a flirtatious relationship, with Silver going so far as to kiss Sapphire on the hand. At one point though, it's Silver's turn to exhibit apparent jealousy when Sapphire tries to charm the man from 1948. But despite appearances, Sapphire doesn't entirely trust Silver, as her conversation with Steel about him reveals.

Sapphire's creation of an illusory car is achieved by again spending Story Points with her Elemental Agent trait.

Steel finally develops some emotions (other than impatience and irritation) in this story, showing sympathy for the woman, whom he believes really is from 1948 and is under the man's control. He wants to save her, but sadly this proves to be his and Sapphire's undoing. Sapphire though is uncharacteristically harsh. Probably frightened by what she saw of their future, she's just concerned with escaping from this place. It's an interesting character reversal (and one briefly presaged in *Assignments III* and *V*), with each taking the usual role of the other and it causing their downfall.

S RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This final story from the TV series returns to, if not science fiction, then science fantasy similar in feel to an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Apart from the old man, there are no ghostly elements, and even he doesn't have the same ghost story feel as *Assignments I* and *II*. This story is a conundrum to be solved by the Players and a trap to escape from. The lack of any proper briefings, Silver being here already, time being frozen and then skipping forwards, the people from different years, the invisible barrier cutting them off from the outside world. The introduction or discovery of each of these adds to the layers of mystery, as do certain apparent discrepancies: did Silver arrive before the couple from 1948 as he says or after them as they claim; and if it's only just after midnight in "real" time, why have the

clocks been showing 8.54pm ever since Silver arrived six hours ago, as he states?

This assignment is different from the others and the set up may make Players suspicious of it from the start. The briefing is minimal to non-existent, being little more than a feeling that the elemental agents are needed here. Silver, a Specialist, having arrived before the Operators is also not the normal procedure.

The NPCs from different times can act to divert the Players and keep them busy while they investigate the environment and try to understand what's happening. Initially, only the man and woman claiming to be from 1948 are present. The more bizarre and threatening character Johnny Jack arrives later, and the old man in the garage can appear and disappear as the GM needs in order to distract the elementals.

The woman from 1948 can be a blank slate for the GM to use. Is she merely a human the transient beings are using? Does removing the implants remove their control or is this another deception? Could she in fact be a fourth transient being? Her final scene sees her once again with the lead transient being, an indication that she's actually another of them. In fact, a visual clue is that her clothing has transformed like the others. Her outfit is now black, as is her hat. She has become a stereotypical black widow. Her stats on page 82 have been written as a transient being; if the GM prefers her to be human under the man's control, she should have basic human stats with the addition of Cyborg, Enslaved and Networked (Major: with the man).

In this scenario, Silver could be a Player Character or an NPC. If the latter, can the Players trust him? Has he told the truth about his early arrival or is he keeping something back? As already noted, there are a couple of discrepancies in what Silver tells Sapphire and Steel, presumably the result of the transient beings trying to sow distrust among the elementals.

Time being frozen is also something to tease the Players with, with each advancement being double the previous one (first ten minutes, then twenty, then forty). After Silver creates a duplicate box, the time jumps will quadruple each time rather than double. The GM can use the time jumps at points when the Players need to be distracted from their investigations, as the TV story sometimes does, or conversely to get them out of a tight corner.

The barrier around the service station will probably also take up the Players' time as they investigate it and try to find a way through. But even their teleport abilities won't get them out of this, and tampering with it will alert the transient beings.

Once the elementals are here in this place, there is really no reason for the transient beings not to spring their trap immediately. It could be done at any time, so long as one of them has the time travel device on them. But they seem to enjoy the confusion and concern that the situation creates: they are Chaos to Sapphire and Steel's Order.

Avoiding the fate of Sapphire and Steel is possible and is most likely achieved by disposing of the transient beings into the past, as Silver did with the old man and Johnny Jack. The Players then merely have to work out a means to escape from the time break…

TRANSIENT BEING
(Special Good Alien Trait)

A character with this trait is a transient being. They gain the following Good traits for free: Indomitable, Psychic, Shapeshift (Major), Telepathy and Teleport. They also gain the following Bad traits: Adversary (Major: The elementals) and Obligation (Major: A higher authority). In addition, Transient Being allows the character to purchase Gadget traits.

Transient Being costs 8 Character Points.

A Note On The Transient Beings' Stats:
With the exception of the man from 1948 easily overpowering Steel, we don't know much about the transient beings' powers. The Transient Being trait and the stats on the following pages are therefore highly speculative. They have been influenced by the previously noted similarities between the transient beings and the elementals, but the GM is free to adjust them as desired.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Silver:** An elemental agent; specialist in all things technical. See page 15 for Silver's stats.
- **The man:** Claims to be from 1948 and running away with the woman. Suave but taciturn. Becomes angry when pressed for answers by Steel. Is actually one of the transient beings, but even so loves the woman.
- **The woman:** Also claims to be from 1948 and running away from her husband. Appears to be 14 years younger than the man. Is nervous and defensive. Revealed to be another transient being, possibly the leader for this mission, having a cool, superior attitude, but is in love with the man.
- **The old man:** Initially appears to be a ghost from 1925. Actually another of the transient beings.
- **Johnny Jack:** Claims to be a travelling entertainer from 1957. Wears a battered top hat and jacket with dolls sewn into it ("all the children on my back"), has lipstick and rouged nose and cheeks, and carries a tambourine. Can be comical, unsettling or threatening, sometimes all three at once. Again, is really another transient being whose real personality is cold and menacing.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- An adventure in which Sapphire and Steel attempt to escape from the trap is an obvious sequel to this story.
- This assignment could be the first salvo in a war between the elementals and the transient beings (one of the scenarios that P.J. Hammond was considering if the series had continued). A campaign set during this war could be a deadly proposition for elemental agents!
- Interviewed in the 1980s about the future of the series, P.J. Hammond revealed that one option was to have Sapphire and Steel stranded on Earth, having lost some of their powers during the conflict with the transient beings.

THE MAN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**8**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Fighting 3, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Technology 2, Transport 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – The elementals
Alien
Armour (5 points)
Devotion – The woman
Indomitable
Menacing
Networked (Major) – The woman
Obligation (Major) – A higher authority
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special)
Telepathy
Teleport
Transient Being
Voice of Authority
Vortex

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

THE WOMAN

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 3, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 4, Survival 2, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – The elementals
Alien
Devotion – The man
Face in the Crowd
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Indomitable
Networked (Major) – The man
Obligation (Major) – A higher authority
Precognition
Psychic
Psychometry
Shapeshift (Special)
Telepathy
Teleport
Transient Being
Voice of Authority
Vortex

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

THE OLD MAN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival 4, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – The elementals
Alien
Indomitable
Menacing
Obligation (Major) – A higher authority
Psychic
Psychic Illusions (see page 40)
Shapeshift (Special)
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Teleport
Transient Being

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 6

TIME TRAVEL BOX (Special Gadget)

Traits: Innocuous (Minor), Precognition, Psychometry, Vortex
Cost: 11 Story Points

JOHNNY JACK

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Fighting 2, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Technology 4

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – The elementals
Alien
Boffin
Indomitable
Menacing
Obligation (Major) – A higher authority
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special)
Technically Adept
Telekinesis
Telepathy
Teleport
Transient Being

EQUIPMENT
Tambourine, ragdolls (his children)

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 6

APPENDIX A: ADVENTURE SEEDS

THE FORGOTTEN

Location: The abandoned offices of an old secret police base in an unspecified country.
Trigger: The erasure of undesirable citizens from official records and from public consciousness.
Irregularities: "Ghosts" of those erased from history by the former police state have returned, seeking revenge for their stolen pasts.

STASIS

Location: A scientific research laboratory.
Trigger: An experiment to isolate and examine interstitial time, the theoretical gap between the smallest units of time that lies outside reality (see *Doctor Who: The Time Monster*).
Irregularities: Time has frozen in and around the laboratory. Only the elemental agents can move through it, unless they manage to free any of the trapped personnel. But something has escaped from interstitial time and into reality. A creature composed of null-time is hunting.

THE BLACK MIRROR

Location: A museum at night.
Trigger: An antique mirror reputed to have witnessed a savage murder.
Irregularities: Almost exactly two hundred years later, the mirror is now said to show a vision of a future death. After dark, several of the museum's staff have caught glimpses of something in its reflection, too brief to be able to identify the victim. Can the elementals prevent a murder that hasn't happened yet? And precisely who or what is intending to commit it? Events are due to repeat themselves on the two hundredth anniversary of the first death…

THE CRIMES OF THE PAST

Location: An archaeological dig in a remote and marshy moorland.
Trigger: The excavation of the bog body of a man who was ritually executed for a crime he didn't commit.
Irregularities: Resurrected by the Darkness, the bog body is a revenant intent on avenging itself on the living.

AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE

Location: A haunted sound studio.
Trigger: The recreation of sounds from phonautographs, an early process for the transcription of sound waves traced in a line on smoke-blackened paper (see Phonautograph).
Irregularities: Previously thought impossible, the playback of the earliest surviving phonautographs by optically scanning them and converting them into digital audio files has released something. It is the recreation of an exact moment that had been unheard for almost two hundred years, allowing Time to break through in the sound studio, manifesting as the eerie, disembodied voice of Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville, inventor of the phonautograph, singing *Au Clair de la Lune*.

SHADOWS AND LIGHT

Location: A reconstructed medieval village acting as a living history tourist attraction.
Trigger: The precise re-enactment of a known historical event.
Irregularities: The reenactors' shadows, empowered by Time, have taken on a life of their own and consumed their former owners. A straightforward situation is made more complex by the arrival of transient beings seeking to recruit the shadows for their war against the elementals.

APPENDIX B: OTHER ELEMENTAL AGENTS

BRONZE

Classification: Operator

Bronze is one of the more garrulous elementals and has a charming personality, particularly in his dealings with humans.

He's physically tough and very strong, and is well suited for hand combat. Bronze also has an affinity with electricity. He's immune to electrical attacks of any kind, and his body can build up a charge which he can direct at opponents. Bronze can also generate a psychic shield (see *The Fourth Doctor Sourcebook*).

COPPER

Classification: Specialist

Copper is a Specialist who is good with technology. She's particularly adept with electrical devices and can usually control them remotely, in a similar manner as Silver. Like Bronze, she is immune to electrical attacks and effects.

Copper has a flirtatious personality. But Lead's comment that she is having problems with Silver again is more to do with rivalry over the similarity of their abilities than any romantic involvement.

DIAMOND

Classification: Operator

Diamond is stunningly attractive and she knows it. She's also impervious to a high level of physical damage, which has made her rather blasé about sustaining injuries. Her fingernails are sharp enough to cut through most materials with ease, even armour plating. Diamond's confidence has made her arrogant.

BRONZE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**5**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 3, Fighting 4, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Attractive
Charming
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Immunity – Electricity
Natural Weapon (Major) – Electrical Blast: 5(2/5/7) damage
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Shield
Psychic Training
Quick Reflexes
Telepathy
Teleport
Tough

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

COPPER

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Science 2, Subterfuge 3, Technology 4, Transport 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Attractive
Charming
Control (Minor) – Anything powered by electricity
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Immunity – Electricity
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

DIAMOND

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**6**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 4, Convince 3, Fighting 2, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Armour (10 points)
Armour Piercing (Major) – Any unarmed attack by Diamond ignores the first 10 points of a target's Armour or Toughness
Arrogant
Attractive
Clairvoyant
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

GOLD

Classification: Specialist

Like Silver, Gold cuts a dapper figure, but he is a much less approachable one. He is impatient and is even less understanding of humans and emotions than Steel. His vanity over his appearance and his lack of flexibility make it difficult for him to get on with other elementals. Perhaps he just lacks experience.

Gold's field of expertise is vehicles, which makes him useful to have on certain missions.

GRANITE

Classification: Operator

Granite is one of the more physically imposing elementals. He's a giant of a man with superhuman strength and resistance to injury. Unlike the similarly massive Lead, Granite is not a jolly giant but a grim one prone to using his size to get things done his way.

As well as his formidable strength, Granite is highly resistant to heat, fire and high pressure.

IRON

Classification: Specialist

Iron's appearance as a middle-aged woman is deceptive, as she's tougher and far stronger than she looks. She also has a forceful nature and exceptional willpower, though she often seems aloof.

As might be expected from her name, Iron has an affinity with magnetism. She's able to manipulate objects with a significant ferrous content and control electrical and mechanical devices remotely.

GOLD

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 4, Science 2, Subterfuge 2, Technology 3, Transport 5

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Argumentative
By the Book
Control (Minor) – Can remotely control any vehicle
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Teleport
Weakness (Minor) – Lack of empathy (-2 penalty on all social rolls)
Weakness (Minor) – Personal vanity

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

GRANITE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**8**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Fighting 4, Marksman 1, Survival 4

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Armour (5 points)
Brave
Distinctive
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Environmental (Minor) – Heat and extreme pressure
Immunity – Fire and heat-based attacks
Menacing
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

IRON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**5**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 3, Marksman 1, Science 1, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Brave
Control (Major) – Electrical or mechanical devices
Elemental Agent
Environmental (Minor) - Radioactivity
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Indomitable
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telekinesis – Limited to objects with a ferrous metal content
Telepathy
Tough
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

JET

Classification: Operator

Jet has a couple of unusual psychic powers: like Bronze, she can generate a psychic shield to protect herself from injury; and she can also project a mental blast capable of rendering an opponent unconscious (see *The Fourth Doctor Sourcebook* for details on both of these). Jet is highly intelligent and is also in tune with those around her, being both empathic and able to manipulate the emotional states of others. She also has an unreciprocated attraction to Steel.

MERCURY

Classification: Specialist

Like Silver, Mercury has the power to transform materials from one thing to another. In *Assignment IV*, for example, Sapphire and Steel drew on his ability to transform a sheet of glass into a silvered mirror. But unlike Silver, this does not extend to creating devices with his bare hands.

Mercury is agile and dextrous. Unsurprisingly, he also has a mercurial temperament, his mood changing unpredictably from excitement to frustration to anger to joy.

QUARTZ

Classification: Investigator

Quartz is an Investigator, an Operator sometimes sent in advance to reconnoitre a location. His ability to manipulate light waves allows him to become invisible at will and even to create illusions, both of which are useful for a scout. He can also use this ability to confuse and influence behaviour to a limited extent.

Quartz has a reserved character in comparison to most elementals.

JET

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Knowledge 4, Science 2, Subterfuge 3, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Attractive
Distinctive
Empathic
Elemental Agent
Emotional Complication (Minor) – Her attraction to Steel sometimes causes Jet problems
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Lucky
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Shield
Psychic Stun
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

MERCURY

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**6**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 5, Convince 3, Marksman 2, Medicine 2, Subterfuge 4, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Attractive
Convert (Major) (see page 15)
Eccentric (Minor) – Emotionally mercurial
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Impulsive
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Quick Reflexes
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

QUARTZ

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Knowledge 2, Marksman 1, Medicine 3, Subterfuge 5, Survival 4, Technology 3, Transport 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Invisibility (Special Good) – Can become visible or invisible at will
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Illusions (visual only; see page 40)
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

RADIUM

Classification: Operator

Radium has the ability to generate a protective forcefield around himself, though when he does, it becomes visible as a soft glow outlining him. He can also see beyond the visible range of the electromagnetic spectrum. Radium has an ability which is remarkably rare among elementals: he can project his mind into the body of a non-elemental and control them. But this leaves his own body empty and vulnerable.

Radium has a flamboyant personality with a tendency to being flippant and irreverent.

RUBY

Classification: Specialist

Ruby is a Specialist whose area of expertise is music and sound. In particular, she has an innate understanding of time within musical rhythms.

Ruby has a dry, sardonic personality. There is an unconfirmed rumour that she once had a romantic link with Steel.

URANIUM

Classification: Specialist

Uranium has the highest atomic weight of any elemental who can be assigned to missions where there is life. He has a low level of radioactivity contained within himself, which he can release as bursts of energy. He is also extremely strong. Uranium's immunity to radiation means that he is often selected for assignments to dangerously radioactive locations.

Uranium's personality is abrasive and unpredictable, and he doesn't get on well with many of his fellow elementals.

RADIUM

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Knowledge 2, Science 1, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Alien Senses – UV, X-ray and Gamma vision
Attractive
Brave
Eccentric (Minor) - Flamboyant
Elemental Agent
Environmental (Minor) - Radiation
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Forcefield (Minor) – Glows when this is active
Loud
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Possess – But leaves his own body behind
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 9

RUBY

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Craft (Music) 5, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 4, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Alien Senses – Enhanced sense of time within musical rhythms
Clairaudience - As Clairvoyance but sound only
Elemental Agent
Empathic
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Keen Senses (Minor) - Hearing
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

URANIUM

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**6**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Fighting 3, Marksman 3, Science 2, Survival 4, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Argumentative
Distinctive
Elemental Agent
Environmental (Minor) - Radiation
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Impulsive
Menacing
Natural Weapon (Major) – Energy Burst: 5(2/5/7) damage
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Tough

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

APPENDIX C: FILMOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

TELEVISION*
Assignment I by P.J. Hammond (ATV, 1979) – a.k.a. *Escape Through a Crack in Time*
Assignment II by P.J. Hammond (ATV, 1979) – a.k.a. *The Railway Station*
Assignment III by P.J. Hammond (ATV, 1981) – a.k.a. *The Creature's Revenge*
Assignment IV by P.J. Hammond (ATV, 1981) – a.k.a. *The Man Without a Face*
Assignment V by Don Houghton & Anthony Read (ATV, 1981) – a.k.a. *Dr McDee Must Die*
Assignment VI by P.J. Hammond (ATV, 1982) – a.k.a. *The Trap*

***The TV stories had no titles on original broadcast, but British home media releases named them *Adventures I-VI* and more recently *Assignments I-VI*. The alternative titles were probably first used in *Time Screen* magazine and are considered unofficial.

In addition to the TV stories, a number of audio dramas, text stories and comic-strips have been published. Although not covered by this sourcebook, they're listed below for reference:

NOVELISATION OF ASSIGNMENT I
Sapphire and Steel by P.J. Hammond (Star Books, 1979; reprinted by Virgin Books, 1992)

COMIC-STRIPS
Sapphire & Steel comic-strip written by Angus Allan and illustrated by Arthur Ranson ran in *Look-in* magazine from 1979 (Vol.9) No.33 to 1980 (Vol.10) No.19, and from 1980 (Vol.10) No.33 to 1981 (Vol.11) No.17 (Independent Television Publications, 1979-81)
The Power of Hecate from 1980 Nos.4-6 was reprinted in *Look-in: The Best of Look-in* (Prion, 2007)

ANNUALS
Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981 (World International Publishing, 1980) – includes five short stories (writer/s not credited)
Look-in Annual, title undated but copyright 1981 (Independent Television Publications, 1981) – includes a short story, *The Albatross* (writer not credited)

AUDIO DRAMAS
1.1 *The Passenger* by Steve Lyons (Big Finish, 2005)
1.2 *Daisy Chain* by Joseph Lidster (Big Finish, 2005)
1.3 *All Fall Down* by David Bishop (Big Finish, 2005)
1.4 *The Lighthouse* by Nigel Fairs (Big Finish, 2005)
1.5 *Dead Man Walking* by Nigel Fairs, based on a story by John Ainsworth (Big Finish, 2005)
2.1 *The School* by Simon Guerrier (Big Finish, 2006)
2.2 *The Surest Poison* by Richard Dinnick (Big Finish, 2006)
2.3 *Water Like a Stone* by Nigel Fairs (Big Finish, 2006)
2.4 *Cruel Immortality* by Nigel Fairs (Big Finish, 2007)
2.5 *Perfect Day* by Steve Lyons (Big Finish, 2007)
2.6 *The Mystery of the Missing Hour* by Joseph Lidster (Big Finish, 2007)
3.1 *Second Sight* by Nigel Fairs (Big Finish, 2008)
3.2 *Remember Me* by John Dorney (Big Finish, 2008)
3.3 *Zero* by Steve Lyons (Big Finish, 2008)
3.4 *Wall of Darkness* by Nigel Fairs (Big Finish, 2008)